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VOL. III No. 10

JULY 1950

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COALITION GOVERNMENT

T. E. UTLEY

WHEN the result of the last General Election was announced it was apparent that there were three possible courses open to the parties. They might continue to wage normal warfare, allowing the fate of the Government to hang on the ability of its Whips to triumph over accident and illness whenever the Opposition chose to press a division on an issue of confidence. They might reach some arrangement not to raise controversial issues, or at least not to treat any but really crucial questions as matters of confidence. Or they might form a coalition, limited in duration by some express purpose like the provision of the year's supplies. Of these possibilities the first, which has in fact been adopted, is clearly the hardest to defend on any rational estimate of national interests. If it is persisted in the Government will probably fall before the end of the year, and it will almost certainly fall at the first occasion which fate provides after the implementation of the Iron and Steel Act next January. In the meantime both parties will have the strongest motive for avoiding any action likely to alienate the marginal vote or to dismay their own supporters, and this limitation rules out many of the policies which economists publicly affirm and politicians privately admit to be necessary to national recovery. Parliamentary government conducted under the conditions of the present Parliament is also liable to look ridiculous, and the health of Members may suffer from the need for constant attendance in the House.

The second course, that of a partial truce between the parties, would at least have yielded more interesting results. Since the legislature would have had to be occupied somehow, and since it could not be occupied on Government Bills classified as issues of confidence, except when such a Bill was really necessary to Government policy, the Whips would have had to be taken off far oftener than in any Parliament in the present century and private members would probably have been allowed much more time for their own Bills and motions than they have enjoyed in living memory. As a result the House of Commons might have again become what it used to be in the middle of the nineteenth century, a place where policy is made, subject to the guidance of the Government, rather than a place where Governments are encouraged and upheld, subject to the conscience of the House. This would have checked the despotism of the twentieth-century party machine, which is almost universally admitted to have reached absurd proportions, but the

process would almost certainly not have gone far enough to wreck the two-party system. An arrangement of this kind, however, would have been extremely hard to work. For the party leaders it would have meant a sacrifice far harder to bear than any surrender of principle or any degree of contamination. It would have meant some loss of authority over their own subordinates. It would have injured the pride of the Front Benches, inflicted unemployment on the Whips' offices and bred bewilderment and disaffection in the party bureaucracies which are trained to follow an undivided command. It is surprising indeed that this counsel of perfection should ever have been considered by anyone except back-benchers; but there is some evidence that it was considered at a higher level, and now that the Opposition has asserted its independence in three critical divisions the idea of a partial truce is again being canvassed.

What is significant is that the third possibility, that of a coalition, has been almost universally discounted. On the face of it, the arguments for a coalition seem about as strong as they could well be in peace-time. Neither party can be sufficiently confident of victory at the next election to justify it in writing off completely the possibility of an alliance with its opponents. The two main parties are so equally balanced that neither need fear being dwarfed by the other. No party can particularly want to be saddled with the sole responsibility for attacking the economic crisis. All parties are broadly agreed on foreign policy. Labour has already been obliged to drop the more controversial items in its programme for a year and has, as the right wing of the party must be aware, every electoral advantage to gain from not putting them back. If it is objected that the left wing of the party would regard the abandonment of nationalization as treason it must be replied that it is by no means certain that nationalization can be extended even if a coalition is avoided. Other things being equal, it should be easier to defend the postponement of these measures as a patriotic concession to the exigencies of coalition politics than to present the Party enthusiasts with a Socialist Party shorn of Socialism. Similarly, the Conservatives, who in the last thirty years have always preferred to appear in the guise of a coalition, must know that while they stand a fair chance of beating the Socialists on nationalization they cannot be sure of convincing the electorate of their readiness to maintain full employment without the aid of powerful reinforcements which only the Labour Party can provide. As for the Liberals, a coalition with one or other of the main parties would seem to be the only means of materially increasing their representation in the Commons.

Nevertheless, of all the possible developments in British politics within the span of the present Parliament a coalition is generally admitted to be the least likely. Mr Churchill, it is true, has wistfully

reflected that if the present House of Commons had been elected in 1945 a coalition would have ensued; but he has repeatedly asserted, though with varying degrees of emphasis, and his supporters have reaffirmed in far less equivocal terms, that the Conservative Party will not seek or accept an alliance with the Socialists. Even the more modest proposal for an alliance with the Liberals has aroused little enthusiasm in the rank and file of the Conservative Party. Labour is opposed on principle to a coalition with the Tories and has not courted the Liberals. The Liberals have finally rejected the Conservative advances and have made none to Labour. Thus, at the very moment when the case for a national government, or at least for some realignment of parties, seems strongest all three parties are fanatically devoted to their independence.

At least some of the causes for this aversion from the idea of coalition are to be found in recent political history. With the Conservatives it derives partly from the lurking suspicion that what may be called the coalition 'card' has been overplayed. They have become aware that from an electoral point of view one of their most serious deficiencies is a reputation for being willing not merely to display their own wares under false labels, or even to sell other people's wares under their own labels, but, what is infinitely worse, to sell other people's wares under other people's labels and rest content so long as they draw their weekly wages. The charge is no doubt grossly exaggerated, but it carries enough conviction to make Conservatives sensitive about exposing themselves to it by taking the initiative in demanding a coalition with Labour. The anxiety which many of them feel at Mr Churchill's and Lord Woolton's assault on the chastity of the Liberals is due partly to this, partly to the feeling that there is something ridiculous in continual and unrewarded soliciting, and partly to the shrewd perception that to carry conviction a coalition should be formed for ideal ends which have as little apparent connection with votes as possible, and that therefore pre-election coalitions between opposition parties are always suspect. The Liberals are moved partly by historic animosity and partly by the natural fear of being absorbed, a fear which, in the case of their relations with the Conservatives, is grounded on experience. In the minds of the Socialists the idea of coalition is inextricably associated with the formation of Mr Ramsay MacDonald's National Government in 1931. Any Labour Minister who showed signs of accepting it would be branded as a self-confessed traitor. The left wing of the party, which has a considerable capacity for bearing disappointments inflicted by its own leaders, would almost certainly go into opposition against a Tory-Labour Ministry, however left-wing its policy might be.

These are the proximate causes of the present hostility to coalitions.

Underlying them, however, is the conviction, which professes to be founded on history, that a coalition is an artificial expedient which, at any rate in peace-time, leads automatically to the absorption of one party by another and to the creation of a new Opposition. The tacit assumption behind the views of all three parties is that the country is permanently divided into two camps which may for convenience (but not without some historical equivocation) be called Right and Left: that the essence of the difference between them is that the Right favours the maintenance of the established order, whereas the Left favours radical change in the direction of more State control and greater social and economic equality: that the whole virtue of Parliamentary democracy is that it provides a continuous and peaceful outlet for these aspirations: and that any coalition must be a victory for one side or the other. If the terms of the political conflict are in fact as rigidly and permanently defined as this, it is hardly surprising that parties fight shy of coalitions which they are not sure of dominating. It must now be considered whether this view of the nature of democratic politics is correct.

From the late sixteenth century British politics has been concerned (at least intermittently) with questions of principle, and there has generally been a latent division of opinion about the nature and ends of government. Furthermore, this division has seemed retrospectively to be a constant thing, expressing a permanent rift in the national character. It is extremely hard, however, to say precisely what it consists in. It certainly has not always concerned equality, nor has it corresponded to the social cleavage between rich and poor. Even when the attempts of Tory historians to represent the rule of Strafford as an idealized version of the dictatorship of the proletariat have been discounted, it remains true that the supporters of the King tended on the whole to be rather the poorer than the Parliamentarians. Equally, the eternal conflict in the nation's soul cannot be interpreted in terms of the tension between liberty and authority, for the Right is at one moment to be found on the side of order and at another on that of freedom (and even, as in the case of the defence of Ulster before 1914, on that of rebellion); while the Left is equally variable, oscillating in modern times between Gladstonian Liberalism and extreme collectivism. To say that the Right stands for the principle of conservation and the Left for that of change, though partly true, is deceptive. In at least one of the classic controversies between Right and Left, the Tariff Reform question, the Right were advocating a fiscal revolution and the Left were strenuously defending the established order.

The real distinction between Right and Left is between an approach to politics which is predominantly historical and empirical and one

which is essentially rationalistic. An historical and empirical approach does not necessarily bias a man at any particular time towards authority, privilege or passivity. It does bias him in favour of rigidly practical and clearly defined objectives, to particularity in his judgments and to a view of society which emphasizes its corporateness and accepts the irrationality of many of the bonds which unite it. The rationalistic approach, on the other hand, is most at home with general truths. It likes to analyse everything into its essential elements, tends to emphasize the similarities rather than the differences among men and societies, is impatient of the irrational and the accidental and is therefore at once both individualistic and universalistic in tendency. Above all, the left-wing mind seeks the rational ordering of society. This sometimes leads it to favour conscious planning, and in other and more optimistic moments to assume that interests automatically harmonize and that freedom always conduces to reconciliation. It is of course obvious that any political judgment contains elements of both rationalism and empiricism, an appeal to general principles as well as to facts. The difference is that the Right, sometimes through faith in tradition and more generally from scepticism about the future, tends to be more empirical than the Left, and the Left, from its confidence in reason, to be more dogmatic than the Right.

This difference of temperament and conviction, however, has not always been reflected in a party system. Throughout the eighteenth century it was for most of the time suppressed and did not come into the open again until the American Revolution (like the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution) provoked a debate about fundamentals. The Revolution of 1688 was in fact a triumph for empiricism over the theological absolutism of Tory thinkers like Filmer and the rationalism of the late-seventeenth-century Whigs as embodied in Locke and, more effectively, in the pamphlets of Lord Shaftesbury's literary henchmen. After the suppression of the Jacobite rebellions what remained of the creed of pure Toryism, respect for the institutions of monarchy and the Established Church, was amalgamated by Burke with the Whiggery of the early-seventeenth-century common lawyers and Parliament men (itself an empirical creed) to form the foundations of modern Conservatism. Meantime the dogmatic rationalism of the late-seventeenth-century Whigs had reappeared in the philosophy of natural right as represented by Jefferson and Paine. Throughout most of the eighteenth century, however, the issues of practical politics in Britain were of a minutely practical or purely personal kind. The Constitution favoured a group rather than a party system and politicians accordingly continually changed sides, with the result that nearly all governments were coalitions. Constitutional developments in the

nineteenth century, however, more particularly the steady expansion of the franchise and the increasing rigidity of Cabinet control over the Commons, conspired to limit the number of effective parties to two. Since the electorate was too various to make it safe for either of these parties to appeal solely and continuously to one class some other basis for their unity had to be found, and it was supplied by the historic division between Right and Left.

Parties, however, are not academies of political philosophy, and if politicians tend either to empiricism or rationalism they are usually unaware of the fact. A political party, however profoundly abstract the basis of its unity may be, is also a body of men with practical aims. Furthermore, although until the present century no party professed to represent the interests of a particular class, each party, in so far as it concerns itself at all with matters of contemporary importance, is almost certain to look primarily for its support to particular interests in the country, and to be regarded, at least temporarily, as the special spokesman of those interests. From time to time an issue arises, like the Corn Law question in 1846, which brings into the forefront of politics social or religious animosities which play havoc with party loyalty. Throughout the nineteenth century there were important social interests which were not adequately represented in the main parties, or even in the electorate itself. The party system, however, was flexible enough to come to terms with these facts. Members were not yet wholly dependent on party organization. Inside the two great parties, therefore, there were usually distinct groups, powerful and independent enough to be almost separate parties. Indeed, it was not until 1931 that the two-party system acquired its present rigidity.

The coalitions formed since 1832 (when the first step was taken, although unconsciously, towards the modern party system) may be most usefully divided into the two obvious categories of those formed in peace-time and those formed in war-time. The peace-time coalitions consist of the Aberdeen Whig-Peelite Ministry of 1852, the Palmerston Whig-Peelite Ministry of 1859, the Tory-Unionist Ministry of 1895 and the National Government of 1931. The Aberdeen Ministry arose out of the great split in the Conservative Party in 1846. Sir Robert Peel had effectively rallied the forces of Conservatism after the defeat over Reform in 1832. The Whigs, having accomplished their revolution, were in the embarrassing position of all successful revolutionaries: they had to choose between becoming Conservatives or inaugurating a new campaign for reform which would take them far beyond anything which most of those who had passed the Reform Bill could contemplate with equanimity. While they grappled with this problem they had found themselves confronted in 1841 with a modernized Conservative Party which

promised to defend the reformed electoral system, to resist further radical change and to look favourably on moderate plans of social and administrative improvement. Sir Robert Peel's Ministry of 1841 united all sections of opinion in the country, from Tory landowners to moderate middle-class reformers, leaving the Radicals to Lord John Russell. It foundered, however, on the direct incompatibility of interests between its landowning and its middle-class supporters, as revealed in the Corn Law controversy.

After repealing the Corn Laws the advanced elements of the new Conservative Party, led by Peel, were hounded from power by the authentic Tories, and the country was again thrown into the arms of the Whigs. The Peelites had sympathized with the Whigs only on the immediate issue of fiscal reform. Most of them had opposed the Great Reform Bill and had no sympathy with the rising enthusiasm of Lord John Russell for a further extension of the franchise. Devotion to the memory of their leader and indignation at the treatment which the party had given him, however, prevented them from rejoining the main body of the Tory Party even when it had perforce become reconciled to free trade in corn. The Peelites accordingly formed a third party which, though richer in talent than in numbers, held the balance after the General Election of 1852. Of their two aversions their dislike of the Disraeli Conservatives proved stronger, and at the end of 1852 they entered into alliance with the Whigs in a Government under their own leader, Lord Aberdeen, bringing with them, among other assets, Mr Gladstone. From the first this Ministry was bitterly divided. The Peelites as a party inherited the Tory dislike for Continental enterprises and this sharply distinguished them from the crusading Whigs like Palmerston. The Crimean War broke out in circumstances which made it impossible for the Peelites to oppose it. It was waged inefficiently and without zeal. Meantime, Lord John Russell exacerbated the divisions inside the Cabinet by continually raising the question of reform. The life of the Ministry was distinguished mainly by its failures, and after the Cabinet crises of 1855 the Peelites took the first opportunity to resign.

The coalition, however, was the first step towards a realignment of parties. The Peelites were still sufficiently Conservative to find collaboration with their former opponents irksome; but the gulf between them and the Disraelian Tories, though personal on the surface, was in fact more serious. Peelitism was a form of middle-class Conservatism, and what the Peelites regarded as the betrayal of their leader by the Tory back-benchers might also be regarded as the betrayal of the commercial and industrial classes by the landed gentry. From 1855 to 1859 the Peelites were homeless. Some retired from politics altogether, some drifted back into the Conservative

ranks and some, like Mr Gladstone, maintained their independence. Again, a superficial reading of history might suggest that Mr Gladstone's decision to join the Palmerston Ministry of 1859 was accidental. He had received, and up to a point encouraged, overtures from Lord Derby. A week before he joined Palmerston he had voted with the brief Derby-Disraeli Government. He was tired of the wilderness, and this, no doubt, was largely responsible for his joining the Whigs; but his avowed reason for doing so, that he thought a Derby-Disraeli Ministry would be unsympathetic to the Italian Liberals, was also significant. Mr Gladstone was by temperament a doctrinaire and he had a streak of fanaticism in his make up. His mind was cast in the left-wing mould and his chief objection to the Whigs had always been to that branch of the party which represented the old aristocratic spirit, epitomized in Lord Palmerston, and was already on the decline. He was at one with the Tories in disliking war, but so did the modern free-trade Liberals; and like them, but unlike the Tories, he wished Britain to become the acknowledged leader of the progressive movement in Europe. During his collaboration with Palmerston he dissented from his foreign policy whenever it appeared to be about to create a state of affairs in which words would have to be supported with deeds; but so did many Liberals. His old objection to electoral reform yielded to the influence of his surroundings and to the doctrinaire elements in his own temperament, and he soon became a fully-fledged Liberal, taking the surviving Peelites with him. In the process, however, he contributed to Liberalism the rigorously practical approach to fiscal policy which he had learnt from Peel, and as he was a product of middle-class civilization he in turn put a brake on the Radical elements in the Liberal Party. In the light of these later developments the Aberdeen Coalition may be seen as the first phase in a new alignment necessitated by the sudden emergence of a conflict of classes, which was inadequately reflected in the existing party system. Just as Peel had in 1841 united everybody from the landowning aristocracy down to the lower middle classes and their Radical sympathizers (whom he left to Russell and the Whigs), so the new Liberal Party, which arose out of the alliance of Whigs and Peelites, temporarily united all elements in society, from the unenfranchised multitude up to the landed gentry, who were left to Disraeli and the Tories. In these circumstances, as Disraeli perceived, the hope of the Conservative Party lay in creating a new alliance between the landed gentry and the unenfranchised labouring classes. His Reform Bill of 1867 was too obviously an expedient to reap the immediate reward of electoral success, and though the working classes were sedulously courted by the Disraeli Ministry of 1874, it was not until 1886 that the real opportunity of the Tories came.

Mr Gladstone's Irish Home Rule Bill split the Liberal Party on lines which were religious and ideological rather than social. Some of the survivals of aristocratic Whiggery (like Lord Hartington) and the Radical wing of the party under Joseph Chamberlain were both alienated. For thirty years the Conservatives owed their supremacy to the fact that Liberalism was identified with an alien cause. That the anti-Home Rule alliance turned out to be more than a temporary combination for a limited purpose was due partly to the personality of Chamberlain and partly to the fact that beneath the surface of politics questions far more important than Home Rule had begun to stir and to upset the traditional categories of Right and Left.

Chamberlain was a practical reformer who believed in administration and therefore in power. He was well advanced towards collectivism and he set out to be the spokesman of the newly enfranchised classes. When he entered politics the natural place for such a man, in so far as there was one, was in the ranks of the Liberal Party, which still fought under the banner of progress. But the group of Radicals which he led sat increasingly uneasily with the aristocratic Whigs and the laissez-faire Liberals, and there were elements in orthodox Toryism less repellent to them. Furthermore, in the third quarter of the century it became apparent that the prospect of social advance in Britain depended on her remaining a world power; and in the new age, being a world power involved acquiring and retaining a colonial empire. Imperialism was repugnant to most levels of Whig and Liberal thought. The militant Whigs had their eyes fixed on Europe. The free-trade Liberals tended to be pacific little Englanders. At the same time, capitalism was moving out of its individualistic phase, when it demanded from government nothing but immunity from vexatious control, into its semi-monopolistic phase, when it looked to government for positive support in getting and keeping markets. Business men were becoming reconciled to trade unions and hopeful of winning the acquiescence of the working classes by social reform. The vertical divisions of society seemed in fact to be in process of becoming (or at least to be capable of being made) more important than the horizontal. An alliance between big business men, Tory squires and the working classes seemed to offer the Conservative Party a unique opportunity for capturing the initiative, and it fitted in well with the Tory myth.

The Irish issue gave Chamberlain the chance of testing the spirit of modern Conservatism. For six years he and his Unionist supporters upheld Lord Salisbury's Conservative administration without entering it. Lord Salisbury found Chamberlain no more congenial than Lord Randolph Churchill and the democratic wing

of the Conservative Party; but the Unionists were strong in the Commons, the Irish issue was always there to keep the alliance in existence, and working-class support at elections was imperative for the Conservatives. In 1895 Chamberlain entered Lord Salisbury's government with a group of Unionists, and from this coalition the modern Conservative and Unionist Party dates. Many of the Unionists who went over with Chamberlain, however, were Whigs, exclusively moved by the Home Rule question; and it is significant of the persistence of the division of theory and temperament between Right and Left that when Chamberlain outraged the Liberal tradition by proposing Imperial Preference in 1903 most of them repudiated him, offering themselves to the electorate as free-trade Conservatives. Chamberlain's work, however, remained. He had rallied to the Conservative side for a while the majority of the working classes. His attempt to regenerate the Conservative Party would not have been possible but for the re-grouping of parties brought about by the Irish question and consummated in the coalition of 1895.

Mr Lloyd George's peace-time coalition of 1919 was in fact an untimely protraction of a war-time coalition. Formally, it broke up on the Turkish question. In fact, the great Conservative rebellion of 1922 was due to a combination of causes, including disapproval of what was considered to be Lloyd George's weak handling of Ireland and disgust at the principles, or lack of them, which determined the Government's distribution of honours. Most of the special problems of this coalition Ministry, however, were fundamentally due to its having outlived its welcome, and to the dissatisfaction of a large and unwieldy majority. It exposed one of the main sources of weakness in a coalition formed by the merging of two whole parties. In any party there are always a number of men who have acquired the right to office by long and faithful service. A coalition reduces the number of Cabinet seats available to each party leader. It therefore leads inevitably to the disappointment of someone's legitimate expectations. Since in politics nothing is easier than to sublimate a grudge into a crusade, it inevitably creates centres of opposition which may become the nucleus of new parties, and can at any rate be relied upon eventually to disrupt the Ministry.

Mr Ramsay MacDonald's National Government of 1931 was different from all previous coalitions in that it arose solely out of a change of political loyalty on the part of the leader of a Government already in office. Whether or not the late Professor Laski's contention that MacDonald's conduct was so unconventional as to be a breach of the constitution be upheld (and it can only be upheld on Professor Laski's own highly individual interpretation of the constitutional position of a Prime Minister) it must be admitted that

the coalition which Mr MacDonald formed was, even at the outset, scarcely a coalition at all. Whatever pretension to that name it had, derived from the presence of Lord Samuel's Liberals; but even they did not make it any more of a coalition than the Conservative Party itself had been for thirty years, divided as it was between free traders and protectionists. The withdrawal of these Liberals in 1932 removed the only serious disagreement in the Cabinet. The Liberal National and the National Labour Parties never represented any distinct ideas, and contributed nothing whatsoever to Conservatism.

It follows from this analysis that all the peace-time coalitions since 1832, with the exception of Mr Lloyd George's coalition of 1919, led to the absorption of the weaker by the stronger party. In the case of Mr Lloyd George's it completed the disintegration of one of the two main participating parties. The coalitions which were most fruitful and permanent in their results, those between Peelites and Whigs, and Unionists and Conservatives, were both transitional arrangements which brought about a regrouping of parties, necessitated by the emergence of a new political issue. Both enabled a group of talented politicians to find their natural homes. Both came into being gradually and after a period which enabled the migrating members to sever their former connections and accustom themselves to new associates. The success of these coalitions was due to their transformation into parties, and this transformation was made easier by the inequality of strength between the allies. Those who argue that peace-time coalitions must either lead to the submergence of one party in another or be weak and divided seem to have history on their side. It is equally clear, however, that coalitions played an essential part in the nineteenth-century political system by enabling the party system to adjust itself to changes in opinion and in the alignment of social classes.

The war-time coalitions of Mr Asquith, Mr Lloyd George and Mr Churchill were each formed during a war about the justice and necessity of which the great majority of the nation was agreed. The first two were sharply divided throughout their duration, but not on party lines. Mr Churchill's Cabinet is reputed to have been singularly free from party dissension, and even, with some notable exceptions, from personal disagreement. The main advantage of a war-time over a peace-time coalition is that it is confronted with wholly new issues on which none of the participating parties are committed. Issues like the expediency of a second front cannot be settled by an appeal to political principle and do not emphasize the permanent conflict between Right and Left. In so far as issues of home policy are allowed to arise during the war they invariably weaken this unity; but the immediate danger to the nation is usually strong enough to repress them. For this very reason,

however, public opinion tends to develop in strange ways during a war. Denied its normal outlet, the perpetual conflict between Right and Left reasserts itself either in the rise of new parties like Commonwealth, which keep alive the idea of party strife, or in extra-political movements which, like the Trade Union movement in the 1914-18 war, may subsequently exert a profound influence on politics. The rise of Labour after 1919 was largely due to this cause.

It is often assumed that neither of the wars of the twentieth century could have been won without the leadership of coalitions. In the first place, it is said, public opinion would never allow the large powers of coercion necessary in war-time to be wielded by a single party. It is, however, arguable that the vigilance of an organized Opposition is a better guarantee of just administration than a coalition relatively free from criticism. The case for war-time coalitions is not so much that they are better guardians of liberty than party governments but that party government cannot be conducted in war-time without endangering security and giving encouragement to the enemy. It is often falsely supposed that war-time coalitions also have the merit of enabling the Prime Minister to recruit his Cabinet on the principle of the man for the job. In point of fact a Prime Minister in war-time is no freer to ignore the claims of leading supporters than he is in peace-time.

Our history thus affords no reason for supposing that a full-scale coalition between two large parties can succeed for long in peace-time. Only if it is held that the present economic crisis is so grave as to be the equivalent of a war could the Conservatives and Socialists be reasonably expected to coalesce. Such a coalition would have all the weaknesses of a war-time coalition and none of its advantages. If it were formed for an indefinite period it would almost certainly lead to the emergence of a new party to oppose it. If it were limited by a specific short-term purpose, like the provision of the year's supplies, its members would always have one eye on the impending election, and party animosities would merely be inflamed by proximity. The most fruitful coalitions have arisen, not from the agreement of party leaders, but from the spontaneous movement of one group within a party towards its opponents. It is by no means certain that the present issues in British politics will be permanent. There is a physical limit to the extent to which industry can be nationalized and a political limit to the extent to which public opinion will tolerate nationalization. The differences between the parties over controls are matters of degree rather than principle. Both sides are committed to maintaining the social services intact while avoiding national bankruptcy, and neither is able to explain the probable incompatibility of these aims. The Conservatives, though they demand reductions in direct taxation, must know that a fiscal

counter-revolution is out of the question; and Sir Stafford Cripps has announced that the nation has reached the limit of its taxable capacity. In these circumstances it would be natural to expect the emergence of some new issue. There are already a number of questions which are potentially much more important than nationalization and on which public opinion is divided without regard to party affiliations. The choice between preferential and multilateral trading; between the leadership, with the U.S.A., of an anti-Russian alliance in Europe and seeking (with the aid of the Commonwealth) to maintain a more independent foreign policy, are both matters on which left-wing Radicals and right-wing protectionist Conservatives have more in common with each other than with the majority of their own parties. Because the party system is so rigid, these divisions, which cut across parties, are suppressed. A contemporary Mr Gladstone or a contemporary Joseph Chamberlain would be eliminated from politics long before his transition from one party to another could be completed. This rigid party system secures stability, but there is a point at which stability becomes ossification, and if the party system were ever to become so ossified that it could not be adapted to new issues and new social alliances, party government would begin to manifest the worst defects of its own nature and of coalition government as well.

THE MARLOWE SOCIETY TRADITION

N. G. ANNAN

1

A STORM, no bigger than a teacup, has settled over the Marlowe Society at Cambridge this year; and though this statement may appear to be the prelude to a tale of a parochial theatrical dispute, it in fact raises the whole question of Shakespearean production on the professional as well as the amateur stage, and therefore is of consequence to anyone who cares for the theatre. The Marlowe Society occupies a curious niche in the staging of Shakespeare today. During the past thirty years it has established a tradition of giving full value to both the form of the play and the meaning of the lines. The tradition was formed by the Provost of King's and by Mr Frank Birch after the first world war and carried on by Mr Donald Beves and Mr George Rylands. It is, indeed, most usually associated with the name of Mr Rylands, who established and perfected the tradition and for the past twenty years has produced the majority of the Marlowe Society productions and also directed John Gielgud in the 1943-44 London productions of *Hamlet* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. This tradition is dutifully commented on by the London critics: thus, this spring, when the Society performed *Henry IV Part II*, the *Times* dramatic critic commented 'these young men are not acting but speaking the play. They are giving us the words with judicious illustrative action and leaving the realistic delineation of incident and character to our imagination . . . Good elocutionary performances by the players of the King, of the Prince, of Shallow'. And Mr J. C. Trewin writes in the *Observer* that the Marlowe Society 'let us hear the play . . . Instead of searching for some new device the producer allowed Shakespeare to speak for himself'. Irony can hardly go further. For this spring the Marlowe was not produced by Mr Rylands but by an undergraduate, Mr Peter Wood; and Mr Wood deliberately turned his attention from the verse-speaking to an interpretation of the psychology of the characters. The one thing he must have hoped that the London critics would notice — namely this change of purpose and emphasis — they failed to see; the one thing that was noticeably absent — namely the old excellence of the verse-speaking — the London critics praised. Poor fellows! They had learnt their part before they took the train from Liverpool Street, and they had the bad luck to be caught out. Impaired as their ear must be after years of attendance in the West End and at Stratford, so that they can no longer approach

these familiar plays with critical detachment, they may be excused and at this point be bowed off the stage. What is more alarming is that the same failure to observe that anything unusual took place in Mr Wood's production is expressed in Cambridge: and this is both unjust to Mr Wood and to the Marlowe tradition. It may therefore be worth while discussing what this tradition of Shakespearean production is; how Mr Wood's conception differs; and what is the plight of Shakespeare on the professional stage today.

2

From the way the London critics refer to the verse-speaking tradition of the Marlowe one would assume that it is just another desirable circumstance in a Shakespearean production on a par with good lighting or designs: the cream, so to speak, in the sauce à l'Americaine. This is to misunderstand the nature of the tradition. It is not just verse-speaking alone but the attitude of the producer to the text that is the core of the tradition: to speak the lines properly is not just an added accomplishment but the essence of a traditional Marlowe Society production.

Acting presupposes an audience and the Marlowe producer starts with a clear knowledge of what he can expect from and give to his audience. Whereas the London, or for that matter the *avant-garde*, producer starts with contempt for the audience and is always pointing out that the audience is dumb, blind, ignorant and sodden, that it cannot understand Shakespeare and thus must be bludgeoned into attention by histrionic outbursts or titivated by startling devices, the Marlowe producer accepts the audience for what it is: a mixture of the intelligent and the stupid, but an audience which has come to see Shakespeare rather than go to the cinema or listen to the wireless. Now, Shakespeare remains on the stage partly because he is an expert playwright and partly because he is a poet: the dramatic tension springs from the texture of the verse. In fact it is the poetry — not just in the soliloquies, but in the most stagey give-and-take passages between characters — that should make the audience grip their seats. And this, indeed, is the object of the producer: to strike at the audience's heart, to awaken in them the feelings of pity and terror that tragedy should inspire, and through their heart to appeal also to their head. That is why the poetry must be spoken as poetry. At this point the Marlowe producer, however, makes an act of faith. He believes that the audience in listening to the poetry will be more moved by it than they would be by a superb actor whose histrionics distract their attention from the verse. It is an act of faith because he knows that not many in any audience are accustomed to listening to poetry — though the number who listen to serious music is increasing yearly. But he has faith in Shakespeare's

So much for the phrasing of the lines. But a score is a continuous piece of music. And at this point before I can complete the argument, I hear discontented murmurs: what about the characterization? The answer to this was given over fifty years ago. 'Even the individualization, which produces that old-established British speciality, the Shakespearean "delineation of character" owes its magic to the turn of the line, which lets you into the secret of its utterer's mood and temperament, not by its commonplace meaning, but by some subtle exaltation, or stultification, or slyness, or delicacy, or hesitancy or what not in the sound of it. In short it is the score not the libretto that keeps the work alive and fresh...'¹ Such was Bernard Shaw's opinion in 1895. And, indeed, none of the above makes any pretence to be a startlingly new contribution to the theory of Shakespearean production. Twenty years ago Harley Granville Barker was trying to hammer these ideas into the heads of actors and producers. His prefaces to the plays took the works out of the study and on to the stage and showed in detail how the characterization grows out of the words and how the lines reflect changes of emotion, of purpose, of mood. It was Granville Barker who showed that the verse is not an accessory after the fact but the very thing that creates the drama; and though he goes into the minutiae of staging, he returns again and again to the significance of intonation, tempo, virtuosity of speech.

Of course the producer must know what kind of verse it is, what Shakespeare in a particular play is trying to do. It is no good, as Granville Barker points out, attempting to get the same effects from the verse in the History plays as in *King Lear*. And no less remarkable than the verse is the construction of the play, the sense of timing, the devices for getting actors off and on stage, the succession of short front-stage and large full-stage scenes. In one sense the producer has an easy task with Shakespeare: stagecraft and the emotional content are both supplied to him in full by the playwright.

The text, then, is the kernel of the play and the rest of the production accordingly falls into place. What is important is that in each scene the actors should be in the right place to deliver their speeches and in complicated passages the actors should be helped to put over their verse, and not hindered, by lighting, grouping and movement. Movement, especially, must be subordinated to the verse and must come with a change in mood or a natural break in the verse-structure or dramatic tension. When the characters are at each others throats in argument, let them be close to each other; when relaxed they can be further apart and move accordingly. Gesture is not something to be added, it must spring naturally from the words — not from the

¹ G. B. SHAW, *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, vol. I, p. 24.

general atmosphere engendered by a speech. I mention this because again and again on the professional stage one sees gesture unrelated to the words. Very often no gesture is needed at all. It has long been a commonplace that no more than token lightning and thunder is needed on the heath when Lear storms his way to madness: the tempest is created by the words. So, on the appearance of the Ghost, 'Angels and ministers of grace defend us!' is a line, combining piety and fear, of sufficient power to create the effect; but actors swoon, shriek, clutch at the air and perform the most disquieting acrobatics at this juncture. On other occasions they act when the words will perform for them what they desire to convey. In the passage where Goneril and Regan refuse to accommodate Lear's servants and the exchanges grow quicker and quicker between them, leading to Lear's great five-word outburst:

Gon. Hear me, my lord:
 What need you five and twenty, ten or five,
 To follow in a house where twice so many
 Have a command to tend you?
 Reg. What need one?
 Lear. O reason not the need:

In this passage, Lear comes full out, tormented to the point where he realizes at the end of the speech that he is going mad. It is the climax to a long passage where he is on the rack and the cues should be picked up instantaneously. When John Gielgud spoke this passage in the 1940 production there was a long pause after Regan's last cruel blow; he then visibly struggled with himself, he bowed his head and trembled with misery, then in a whisper he spoke the lines. The drama had evaporated. And what is more, he took ten lines more to get the audience back into the mood where they felt that he was going to explode. The scene dropped, the tension was broken, the great build-up so carefully constructed by Shakespeare was hurled aside. Again, all we need in *Macbeth* is for the line, *Which of you have done this?* to freeze our blood as Macbeth stares at Banquo's ghost. There is no need in any part of this scene, as in the Olivier production before the war, for Macbeth to leap on the banquet table: the lines then become inaudible and a genuine dramatic effect is replaced by a stock stage trick. This is not to suggest that *no* acting is required in any of these three passages from *Hamlet*, *Lear* or *Macbeth*; what is required is the kind of action which heightens the effect of the line.

3

It is on these principles that the Marlowe Society traditionally conceives a production. To begin with, the cast is selected for its

voice, only secondarily for its ability to act. Lear must be a powerful bass, Edgar a lighter youthful voice; and young men with a flair for mime who have no ear or sense of rhythm are ruthlessly shown the door. The intention is to collect the instruments for the orchestra which is to play the score, to chime the voices together. Naturally the size and shape of the actors matter: Edmund must look the child of Nature who is his goddess, Cleopatra must have pretensions to good looks — but even the looks of the cast are subordinated to their voices, for it is their voices that will, or will not, move the audience by the poetry. Now, this tradition of speaking the play, as opposed to acting it according to a psychological interpretation of the characters, has great advantages for amateurs. Amateurs do not know how to move on the stage, a technique only to be learnt through years of practice. Amateurs lack the accomplishments of professional actors and therefore embarrass and distract our attention if they attempt to heighten the effect produced by the words by 'acting'. But despite this disadvantage they have one great advantage over the vast majority of professionals in Shakespeare. They convey an impression of sincerity and genuineness. The conventions which professionals use to get over the difficulty of speaking verse and moving in an unfamiliar medium cloud their performance; it is often clever, accomplished, remarkable, but somehow *voulu* and subtly false. The undergraduate can give that impression of freshness and sincerity which, when combined with the power to speak poetry, can move an audience more than the accomplished player; the sincerity travels across the footlights and covers up his technical deficiencies. In these days when everything that Lytton Strachey wrote is assumed to be false or frivolous, I may be thought to weaken my case by calling him as a witness; but here is the impression that the Marlowe Society *Henry IV Part I* made on him in 1919:

The first, instantaneous impression was one of immense relief. The King was speaking. The blasé critic might well prick up his ears. How very rarely has a King been heard to speak on any stage! Yet that was what this King, unmistakably, was doing. He was neither mouthing, nor gesticulating, nor rolling his eyes, nor singing, nor chopping his words into mincemeat, nor dragging them out in slow torment up and down the diatonic scale; he was simply speaking; and as he spoke one became conscious of a singular satisfaction — of soothing harmonies, of lovely language flowing in fine cadences, of beautiful images unwinding beautifully, of the subtle union of thought and sound. He ceased, and another speaker followed, and yet another; and the charm remained unbroken... Curiously enough, the one character which failed to make an

impression was the very one which seemed to offer the easiest opportunity for a success. But here the exception proved the rule; for the part of Hotspur was taken by an actor who had evidently learned to 'act'. The result was inevitable. A thick veil of all the elocutionary arts and graces — points, gestures, exaggerations, and false emphases — was thrown over the words of Shakespeare, and in the process Hotspur vanished as effectually as if he had been at His Majesty's.

Strachey wrote when the Marlowe Society performed in the A.D.C. theatre on a small stage with the simplest of sets, where movement was limited; with a sympathetic audience which, owing to the size of the theatre, was in intimate connection with the stage. When in 1938 the Marlowe moved to the Arts Theatre the problem of pure acting ability became more acute; for in a proper theatre, incompetencies and crudities are more obviously exposed, and the producers had to modify and elaborate their techniques. And though the advantages of the move were considerable, the problem of acting remains. There is, for example, in a Marlowe production, usually at least one if not more of the supers who from the audience's point of view had better never have set foot on a stage. Bad acting can detach one's attention from the words just as surely as bad speaking, and in the last two Lent Term productions, both produced by undergraduates, a conscious attempt was made to improve gesture and movement. But the regular producers of the Society have their answer ready. It takes a term of rehearsals to teach actors to speak the lines properly: once devote time to rehearsing processions, small part players in movement, to arguing about gesture and movement and trying out new grouping, to breaking up a whole scene after three weeks' rehearsal and resetting it, and the loss will be far greater than the gain. Amateurs must face the fact that they cannot and will not ever be able to act like professionals. And the audience in Cambridge must acknowledge this fact and feel that the reward of hearing the play properly, perhaps for the first time, repays the occasional malaise of crude mime. Indeed what can more surely indicate a trivial mind than to complain that a Roman soldier's helmet was put on crooked, or that he had knock-knees, or that Julius Caesar looked like a young man dressed up as an old man; and thus to overlook the central question of the presentation of a tragedy?

Nevertheless, these difficulties should melt away when we consider how the professional theatre could play Shakespeare. Surely, a stranger might argue, the conception of treating the text as a score could be translated to the West End and we should achieve the perfect marriage between poetic art and dramatic technique.

Surely it is not impossible to fuse good speaking with good acting. Surely a London audience would respond; for the Granville Barker approach does not deny to the professional actor the opportunity to act and to bring whatever personal magnetism he has to the part. Gielgud has said that one of the great experiences of his life was to be produced by Granville Barker and that he learnt from him more about speaking and feeling a part than from any other man. But the stranger would be wrong — or rather he would see no signs of such a fusion on the London stage today. The tradition of the London theatre in playing Shakespeare is totally different from that of the Marlowe Society. And, perhaps, a good way of showing what the difference is, will be to take this year's production of the Marlowe Society and to show how it was conceived on totally different principles from the old tradition and how it relates to the London stage.

4

Mr Wood's production was by no means without merit: otherwise there would be no point in dissecting it. He is clever and full of ideas; he respected the text, which was practically un-cut; he cares passionately for the theatre. From *Shallow* he obtained a performance bordering on brilliance; he had an excellent Pistol and a good Poins. Moreover, the interpretation of Falstaff was peculiar and suggestive. The boisterousness and good humour were played down and the cunning unscrupulousness of the adventurer was brought out: and deliberately — for Mr Wood was trying, as we shall see, to solve the problem of Falstaff's rejection by the Prince, and one way he sought to do it was by showing how ruthlessly Falstaff treats *Shallow* and how his monstrous egotism and inability to speak the truth leads him to wreck the lives of doddering, sweet-natured, old *Shallow* or wretched cannon-fodder such as *Wart* and *Shadow*. It was as if the producer saw a touch of Long John Silver in Falstaff. Moreover, he succeeded in his purpose: the tavern scene when the Prince and Poins turn on Falstaff for maligning them was savage and downright sinister, and throughout the play the audience was never allowed to forget Falstaff's moral delinquencies. Whether one agrees with this interpretation or not is irrelevant; it was consciously conceived and well executed.

In what, then, lay the singular horror of the production? To begin with, I would say that it laboured under the curse, to borrow a phrase from philosophy, of the *naturalistic fallacy*. Naturalism on the stage is inseparably connected with the name of Gerald du Maurier who perfected a style of acting which persuaded the audience that he was not on a stage but that they were in the drawing-room with him: everything turned on creating the illusion of natural gesture and

everyday speech, the selection of a cigarette from his case, the continual use of the throw-away line, controlled emotion taking the place of gesture in the grand manner. This style admirably suited to the plays of John Van Druten has seeped into the acting of Shakespeare. Anything to be natural, anything to persuade the audience that this is just like life in the twentieth century. The verse is an obstacle. But it can be got over by speaking the verse as prose. Where that is palpably impossible, then a special voice must be used to show the audience that it is poetry. Above all, let there be a lot of business. Business convinces the audience that the Shakespearean world is just like theirs (or how they imagine theirs would be in Elizabethan times). Let there be lute-playing and dalliance, or plenty of slapstick where bottoms are kicked or stools removed from under them. Let there be lots of movement so that we are not embarrassed by recitation. Moreover, all the players must have characters, a group of nobles must all be made to be essentially different whether or not there is any textual justification. In Michael Redgrave's Old Vic *Hamlet* Rosencrantz must be distinguished from Guildenstern: so the latter is turned into a buffoon.

I will return to this, but let us see how the naturalistic fallacy affected Mr Wood's production. To begin with Mr Wood finds the long verse scenes of the nobles plotting rebellion a bore, and they are played with an eye to a yawning audience. Messengers to Northumberland appear from the battlefield panting so naturalistically that the verse is inaudible until they recover their breath and get through it as quickly as possible. All pauses are of an equal length, there is no variation of tone and little variation of pace; nor is there a single attempt to *point* a line — to lead up to the cogent word or phrase and lead away from it. Mr Wood is quite right. Spoken like this verse *is* a bore. It is extremely hard to catch the meaning and it becomes monotonous. So we stop listening and settle down to watch. Once we stop listening we want something to happen instead of all these long speeches. Nor are we disappointed for the rigmarole of the props begins. The Archbishop of York (the biggest bore of the lot) is turned into a comic character. (Query: suggested by Helpmann's outrageous though wildly comical ecclesiastic in the film of *Henry V*?) The Archbishop has a lot of speeches so he is told to eat grapes. We watch entranced. *How* will he get rid of the pips? Meanwhile a great deal, indeed far too much, jovial drinking goes on between the nobles in the most elaborate manner. Presently a servant brings in a ewer and a towel. Archbishop ablutes. And so on — for the length of the play the side-shows steal our attention from what should be the circus. Prince Hal and Poins playing catch with a tennis ball, nobles throwing dice together, jugglers, little boys on stilts (a 'happy touch'), comics for ever munching apples — in fact a

perfect *tohu-bohu* of by-play is eternally distracting our attention. 'But it makes it all so *real* — I feel that this is what it was really like in those days', was one inane but significant apology for this business. But here one must make a distinction between the verse and the prose scenes. By all means play the Falstaff scenes naturalistically — up to a point. So long as Doll does not shriek or Mistress Quickly gabble, let them go to it and enjoy themselves. It is a pity that when Falstaff is maligning the Prince and Poins behind their backs, they should not have been listening but were tickling Mistress Quickly's nose, but let that pass. Much of Mr Wood's comedy was excellent and alive. When, however, we move to the rebellion scenes, it should be realized that they are written in a convention and to play them naturalistically is to make them meaningless.

Mr Wood's treatment of these scenes made one regretfully conclude that he was bored with them — bored, not superficially (because much care had been lavished on them), but bored in a profounder sense. If not, why play Westmoreland as a combination of Osric and Oswald? Because all nobles are bores and must somehow be made to come alive. Now, one would have thought by now that students of Shakespearean drama had accepted as a fact that many of the characters are conventionalized: it is no good, for example, trying to give a psychologically accurate presentation of Edgar, and a vast amount of paper has been written upon since A. C. Bradley's day. Trying to make a character out of Westmoreland is to out-Bradley Bradley. Perhaps Mr Wood feels like Tolstoy that 'all Shakespeare's characters speak, not a language of their own, but always one and the same Shakespearean, affected, unnatural language, which not only could they not speak, but which no real person could ever have spoken anywhere'. Now, of course, it is not the nobles' characters that are of interest but what they represent. The problem of the trilogy of *Richard II* and the two parts of *Henry IV* is: should a loyal subject rebel even when he has a genuine grievance? And the tragedy of *Henry IV, Part II*, is the vision presented to the audience of the breakdown of political life in England. Hotspur is dead, the whole Northumberland party, fighting first on one side and then on the other, is in ruins, the first of the rebels, the King, himself dying.¹ The nobles are great lords, conventionally brave, magnanimous and ruthless. Their tragedy is in the grand, not in the naturalistic, manner.

¹ The death of the actors in this great political drama is subtly echoed by the theme of universal death. And Shakespeare's exquisite juxtaposition of the scene of the insomniac King wearing himself out with worry and on the way to his deathbed with the scene of Shallow musing on old Double's death was missed by the producer who took that opportunity to insert the Interval where we retire to the bar.

Indeed it is hopeless to produce the History plays unless one admits the convention and uses a separate style of acting for the prose and the verse scenes: hopeless to try to jazz up those long scenes where the nobles argue about peace and war. The least the producer can do for the actors who have to declaim long verse speeches is to help them in their relation to the audience, and this Mr Wood did not do. There were many technical blunders due to inexperience: speakers masked by non-speakers, awkward entrances, scenes played too far into the wings. These are forgivable, but it was inexcusable to make the Lord Chief Justice speak his longest speech with his back to the audience; foolish to allow the King to speak the 'Sleep' speech at the back of the stage in profile; cruel to make the young actor who played Prince Hal play his difficult scene with the King up stage — why tuck the King's bed back stage left and play the unimportant antechamber dialogues centre-stage? These are all instances of a production which does not put Shakespeare's poetry first, and of a producer who has no stage instinct.

Then comes the question of Interpretation. Mr Wood is a producer who creates problems in a play and then solves them. The problem for him is the rejection of Falstaff. How are we to make credible this terrible *dénouement*? How are we to make the audience understand it? Twenty years ago it was fashionable to be shocked by Isabella's refusal to submit to Angelo in order to save the life of her brother — to accept the sixteenth-century ideal of chastity was thought to be absurd and Shakespeare to have committed a psychological blunder.¹ Similarly in these days it is assumed that the rejection of Falstaff will upset the audience, a problem which must be solved. The solution, as we have seen, involves a re-interpretation of the part of Falstaff; but it also involves playing Prince Hal as a neurotic boy who, like Hamlet, has to steel himself to do the deed, hating the greatness thrust upon him, torn between his old friends and his new role of King. Such a solution creates far more problems than it solves. It throws out the balance between the King's sons, especially that between Prince Hal and John of Lancaster; it minimizes the grandeur of the court, reduces Prince Hal's stature, makes nonsense of *Henry V*, and kills the tragedy of the rebellion. Why not rebel if the Prince is a whining adolescent? And, in fact, does any real problem exist? There is a marked difference between the Prince of *Part I* and that of *Part II*. From the beginning of the second part, he is detached, almost bitter at times, in his relations with Poins and Falstaff. He realizes that he must change his ways when he succeeds to the Crown, and swears to his sleeping father

¹ Not only twenty years ago. This very complaint is echoed by T. C. Worsley in his review of Peter Brooks's production this year at Stratford. Cf. *New Statesman and Nation*, April 1st, 1950.

that he will honour his trust. The rejection of Falstaff has a priggish note, though softened by the Prince's willingness to provide for his old companion: but it is a sign of the Prince's maturity, at once the tragedy of Falstaff and the hope for England.¹

Now, this kind of 'interpretation', though not necessarily fatal, indicates a dangerous state of mind. In scholarship today the emphasis falls on problems: on the kind of question the scholar asks himself and the method of his solution. Like other important emphases, it degenerates into cant in the hands of lesser men. No one is doing their duty by art unless he finds a problem and solves it. Writing on Shakespearean production,² Mr Wood quotes from Mr L. C. Knights on the question of Hamlet's immaturity, and his 'desire to escape from the complexities of adult living . . . [which] runs through the play from the opening lines of the first soliloquy with their images of melting and yielding, to Hamlet's final welcoming of death as "felicity" . . . His attitudes of hatred, revulsion, self-complacency and self-reproach . . . are in that one-sided insistence, forms of escape from the difficult process of complex adjustment which normal living demands and which Hamlet finds beyond his powers.' Mr Wood wishes to underline this, finds it a problem, and therefore concludes:

Hamlet's posturing and attitudinizing are at their most pronounced in the middle section of the play, from the second entry of the players in Act III, Scene ii to Hamlet's departure for England in Act IV, Scene iii. Perhaps Hamlet might rummage in the players' basket of props and finger a costume during their first appearance. Then, when they re-appear, the audience might hear from one of them —

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounce it to you, trippingly on the tongue . . .

only to realize that this 'player' is Hamlet dressed in a borrowed costume. This he would retain until his departure for England.

¹ I must not be thought to deny that characterization matters and to assert that all an actor has to do in the part of Hamlet is to recite. In the great roles there is scope of interpretation which means emphasizing certain lines and bringing into prominence a facet of the part. A man in his twenties must play Hamlet differently from one in his thirties. What is inexcusable is to invent a lot of rubbish about what Hamlet was before the play began and then act the part in accordance with this myth, for this is to treat a stage part as a character in a novel. When we leave the great roles and come to such characters as Prince Hal, interpretations in the manner of Hamlet are unwarranted, because the playwright is not interested in the psychological relations of the characters to each other. The *point d'appui* is elsewhere.

² *Imprint* vol. I, Nos. 3 and 4, February-March 1950.

For textual justification one would point to his reply to the King's 'How fares our cousin Hamlet?' —

Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish.

Such a dress would indicate visually his posturing bent and at the same time link the superficial opulence of the Court and this posturing.

And so we are to have the whole of the bed-chamber scene with the Queen played by Hamlet *en travestie*! Or does Mr Wood think that this scene is another example of Hamlet's immaturity and posturing? This is what one means when one says that a clever 'idea' solving a 'problem' creates far more difficulties than it dispels. Even if the audience got the point they would be so distracted by the bizarre spectacle that their attention would have drifted from the text — which is the one place where by his own account Mr Wood would rivet it. Mr Wood complains that Mr Knights prefaces his remarks by saying 'I would say that, read as it commonly is, Hamlet etc.' and demands that such untheatrical criticism should cease. But Mr Knights is quite right: his criticism is for the study. To bring out such points on the stage is to upset the whole balance of the play.¹ Consider Mr Wilson Knight's illuminating essay on *Troilus and Cressida*² where he discourses on the philosophical and dramatic significance of Time. It is impossible to bring this out on the stage with the force which Wilson Knight attaches to it. If the point is in the text, it will appear to such of the audience as can appreciate it — if Shakespeare's text is allowed to be heard.

Could the text be heard in *Henry IV Part II*? It was after scene i audible, which is much more than can be said for most London productions. The actor who played the King, a Marlowe veteran, has a beautiful voice, but he was conventionally musical and hence the meaning disappeared. Even Shallow shockingly mistimed the old Double passage and made it comic rather than poignant. But a comparison should be made between Prince Hal and one of the nobles who shall be nameless. The former had not been taught to speak verse: he ran blank-verse lines together, he gabbled and was hysterical. Yet through his performance ran a quality of sincerity which is the hallmark of the young amateur. *Per contra*, the other gave one of the

¹ I confess that Mr Wood's article baffles me: baffles, because it contains good sense contradicted by his production. Characteristically he starts with 'two main problems': the modern audience demanding a 'realistic' drama and its inability to give their full attention to the spoken word. 'Realizing this the producer has too often been tempted to distort the play so as to convey a congenial emotional attitude.' Yet what does he do but pander to this demand both in his remarks on *Hamlet* and in his production of *Henry IV Part II*?

² WILSON KNIGHT, *The Wheel of Fire*, ch. III.

most dreadfully accomplished performances I have ever seen on the amateur stage. It was as if he had studied and mastered the technique of every repertory ham in England: false in gesture, false in voice (oh the double-vowels!) with every pseudo-professional touch at his fingertips, he reminded one of a modern confectionary composed not of sugar, cream and pastry, but of soya-beans, wood-shavings and saccharine, a *ragout* of the synthetic. In this *Henry IV* the text was like an iceberg, seven-eighths submerged: submerged beneath the dollops of rich sauce styled 'Production' which Mr Wood had ladled over the play. The tyranny of ideas over words! Why cut the lines in the speech *Oh God! that one might read the book of fate,*

O if this were seen,
The happiest youth viewing his progress through,
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,
Would shut the book and lay him down and die.

Because Mr Wood thinks they are spurious. Bold pedantry from one who transposes the death of Falstaff from *Henry V* (a good idea but ruined by sandwiching it between two parts of the epilogue, a jingle in an utterly different mood and making nonsense of both.)

As I left the theatre, Matthew Arnold's words came into my mind. 'To handle these matters properly there is needed a poise so perfect that the least overweight in any direction tends to destroy the balance. Temper destroys it, a crotchet destroys it, even erudition may destroy it. To press to the sense of the thing itself with which one is dealing, not to go off on some collateral issue about the thing, is the hardest matter in the world.' What is the thing itself? The play is the thing, the musical score of the text: that is the thing which requires to be rendered, the actual poetic work of art, and if Arnold and I. A. Richards and modern criticism have taught us anything it is to keep the eye on the work in question.¹ Not to go off on the collateral issues of problems and ideas, of by-play and happy touches, which, so far from heightening, destroy the dramatic effect of the text. Ah! the accessories — which are in the last analysis inessentials — what loving care had been bestowed on *them*! It was an ominous sign of where the interest of all concerned in this production lay

¹ Always remembering that the text is the text of a *play*. To assume that because Othello speaks in rhetorical verse Shakespeare intended to convey a falsity in his character is again to confuse the medium of the theatre with that of the novel. Shakespeare's theatre, like any theatre, is full of convention: conventional verse forms, conventional characterization (Men of Melancholy or of Wrath) conventional plots: to dismiss these conventions and to dive into poetic texture and psychology to prove points about characterization reminds one of the way Fundamentalists handle Biblical texts. Cf. Bradley's conclusion that Macbeth has something of the poet in him *because* Shakespeare puts into his mouth such remarkable images.

that I can honestly say that never before have I seen the actors of the Marlowe Society better made-up, more gracefully attired, and with more perfect wig-joins.

5

How, you may ask, does this production relate to the London stage — surely all this pother about a local Shakespearean performance by undergraduates is not of any moment? The disaster of Mr Wood's production is two-fold. In deserting the Marlowe tradition he might have fallen into two evils: the positive evil of being original, of producing something as vital and flamboyant as Peter Brook's *Love's Labour's Lost* (a more dazzling but less satisfactory affair than the more modest Old Vic presentation); or the negative evil of echoing the London stage. It was the latter, the worse of the two evils, that Mr Wood affected. Simply to reflect palely the London mode of staging Shakespeare in the style of Mr Tyrone Guthrie,¹ was Mr Wood's personal calamity. The public and more serious calamity was that Mr Wood's production is in many ways typical of a routine professional Shakespearean season. Why does the professional stage play Shakespeare in this way and why are the results so lamentable?

The French and German theatre have a tradition of speaking and acting poetic drama. The English theatre has none — or if it ever had, it was lost somewhere about the time of Macready. Fully to appreciate this sad fact we must go back to the 'eighties and 'nineties when intelligent dramatic criticism was first heard in England. The first witness is Henry James and in writing of English classic acting he makes a curious comment. 'Success has come easily to Mr Irving, and he has remained, as the first tragic actor in England, decidedly incomplete and amateurish.' James thought the same of Ellen Terry but in her he saw the good points of the amateur, the 'immense naturalness ... impulsiveness of innocence' — in a word her sincerity in performance — but, 'As for her acting, she has happy impulses; but this seems to us to be the limit of it. She has nothing of the style, nothing of what the French call the authority, of the genuine *comédienne*.'² What James objected to in Irving and how he accounted for his success was the absence of a standard of taste in the London theatre. For Irving had few natural gifts. 'His voice is wholly unavailable for purposes of declamation. To say that he speaks badly is to go too far; to my sense he does not speak at all ... Shakespeare's finest lines pass from his lips without him paying the

¹ The producer most admired by Mr Wood. Cf. *Imprint*, No. 4, March 1950 pp. 21, 24.

² HENRY JAMES, *The Scenic Art*, pp. 36-7. See also pp. 103-6, 139-42, 163-4 on Irving and pp. 143 and 285 on Ellen Terry.

scantiest tribute to their quality. Of what the French call *diction* — of the art of delivery — he has apparently not a suspicion.' How did Irving get over these deficiencies? By elaborate staging. 'The more [*Richard III*] is painted and dressed, the more it is lighted and furnished and solidified, the less it corresponds or coincides, the less it squares with our imaginative habits . . . the more Shakespeare is "built in" the more we are built out.'¹

Without a tradition of acting classic drama the English actor is at sea: he gets over his difficulties by elaborate production and by 'acting' — that is by movement and gesture not springing from the words and the text. And this accounts for the uncertainty in so many professional performances. The English actor does not know how to speak Shakespeare. Bernard Shaw was on to this in the 'nineties. 'What a pity it is,' he wrote, 'that people who love the sound of Shakespeare so seldom go on the stage! The ear is the sure clue to him: only a musician can understand the play of feeling which is the real rarity in his early plays' — and then Shaw goes on to relate the familiar story whereby the audience is bored by the atrociously spoken verse and is too hypocritical to acknowledge it. 'To our young people studying acting for the stage I say, with all solemnity, learn how to pronounce the English alphabet clearly and beautifully from some person who is at once an artist and a phonetic expert. And then leave blank verse patiently alone until you have experienced emotion deep enough to crave for poetic expression, at which point verse will seem an absolutely natural and real form of speech to you.'² And what happens when they don't? Shaw gives an account:

Miss Janet Achurch, now playing Cleopatra in Manchester, has a magnificent voice, and is as full of ideas as to vocal effects as to everything else on the stage. The march of the verse and the strenuousness of the rhetoric stimulate her great artistic susceptibility powerfully: she is determined that Cleopatra shall have rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, and that she shall have music wherever she goes. Of the hardihood of ear with which she carries out her original and often audacious conceptions of Shakespearean music I am too utterly unnerved to give any adequate description. The lacerating discord of her wailings is in my tormented ears as I write, reconciling me to the grave.³

For a parallel in modern times, I will cite Ena Burrell's Queen Constance at Stratford where she draped herself over a crucifix and left the stage in slow motion with a howl which continued until she reached, presumably, Stratford railway station.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

² G. B. SHAW, *op. cit.* vol. I, pp. 24-7.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-8.

Henry James's and Shaw's observations could be applied to the stage today. Practically nothing since those days has been learnt by the professional stage about diction. The Comédie Française has a tradition of verse speaking, an incomparable ability to speak strings of alexandrines with variety, and pace, dramatically and musically, and with an exquisite correlation between rhythm and metre. Of course, there are false voices occasionally, actresses who have acquired only the manner or actors who are precious. But the actors know how verse is to be spoken. So, in Germany where young children are trained in the theatre schools and appear in crowd scenes for five, or even ten, years before they speak their first line on the stage. They watch their elders and unconsciously learn how to act and speak. Particularly in Germany, acting is regarded as one of the arts, art as something to be approached with reverence and humility, something to be studied, the technique to be mastered, before one dares to practice. To young German actresses nothing is more astonishing than the English girl who announces that she will get her experience in repertory. It is no good hoping that this high Teutonic seriousness and devotion can be transplanted to England: if it were, it would degenerate into priggery, pedantry and diplomas. But the latitude with which Shakespeare's verse is treated is in part due to a lack of reverence. When Sir Laurence Olivier played Richard III in Hamburg, one of the best of the Berlin actors, Walther Sussenguth, never questioned that it was his duty to see him even though it meant a double crossing of the closed zonal frontier. He returned puzzled. 'Olivier is an outstanding actor, he has everything, all the classical gestures, everything: *spricht aber Oscar Wilde*.' Sussenguth had immediately perceived how Olivier 'threw away' his lines at certain points — a trick which earned him a good many cheap laughs in London and which marred his most dazzling Shakespearean tragic performance. To Sussenguth this vulgarity was incomprehensible. For a great actor Olivier's speaking is more than uncertain: at times it is deplorable. In the film of *Hamlet* he was often dull; in that of *Henry V* his speaking was good except for the Harfleur soliloquy which he shouted. As Lear he did not use his voice at all — possibly because its range is small and he could not manage the rich commanding tones. To analyse the qualities of voice of our leading actors would be humiliating. Gielgud — the best speaker — can declaim verse exquisitely and intelligently; his strength lies in a power of speed without loss of meaning, but he is a prey to mannerism. Wolfitt is too determined to be a solo instrument; unlike Gielgud, he will not blend his tempo with that of the scene. Let us take one recent production, that of Michael Redgrave as Hamlet. His performance deserves high praise. Some of the soliloquies he manages, others not at all; but the good qualities in his speech are Marlowe Society

qualities: sincerity, strength, music. (Michael Redgrave was Prince Hal in the production of 1928.) As for the second line and small part actors, they are entirely at sea. No producer ever coaches them or takes them over their lines *as poetry*. If they are in earnest they go to stage elocutionists — hence the false voice.

How then is Shakespeare produced? The producers consider the verse a bore, and since so much of the plays are in verse, Shakespeare must be livened up. And so we revert to the old Irving-Tree technique. It is not so heavily Victorian nowadays, it is clever and amusing. Every conceivable bit of business is worked in. Hamlet plays chess and sweeps the chessmen off the board while screaming his lines up-stage. Olivier's Macbeth declaiming 'If twere done', has the first four lines of the speech drowned with trumpets. By-play distracts the audience whenever there is a crowd scene — anything to take the audience's mind off the old-fashioned words. But let Mr T. C. Worsley give a description of a production of *Henry VIII* by Tyrone Guthrie.¹ He begins by saying that there are two Guthries, the one with the imaginative mind, the feeling for the visual and the highly developed sense of theatre, the other a self-destructive urchin with a sense of humour, full of bright, clever, silly notions whereby in Cranmer's prophecy speech, a nurse carries the infant Elizabeth across stage — and has a sneezing fit. 'Wouldn't it be fun?' Mr Worsley called his review, 'Wouldn't it be fun if, in the Court Scene, our attention should be distracted from the speeches by the noise of the scribes driving their quills over the parchment? And then couldn't Henry come ponderously down from his throne and push a clerk off his stool? And couldn't someone else imitate him and do it again? But aren't the speeches rather hard to follow meanwhile! Never mind. Anyhow they are very boring. We must try to *make* something of this scene.' Anything to be different and, in a trivial way, original: and moreover, as Mr Worsley notes, if you turn Cranmer into a comic character the Council scene becomes meaningless. It is therefore cut. And here the professional stage is barbaric. Just as in Irving's day when the numerous sets took five or ten minutes to strike and set, thereby making cuts necessary, so today business, pageantry, spectacular duels, sobbing, howling and mouthing — in the bad sense 'acting' — impose cuts. No point in reminding the producer that Shakespeare knew his job and every apron stage scene adds something and counts. No time for all of them. Anyway, we know the story. In Tearle's *Othello* at Stratford the most extraordinary liberties were taken and scenes were juxtaposed, the late in front of the early, or run together; and obsessed with the importance of *Othello*, which he was playing, Tearle elbowed Iago again and again into the background at the wings. And no wonder; his *Othello* was

¹ *New Statesmen and Nation*, July 23rd, 1949.

jealous from the moment he appeared on the stage, so really there was no point in having an Iago. Granville Barker's labour to reveal Shakespeare the expert playwright, to show the dramatic unity of the plays, has been in vain.

It is the producers' preoccupation with the psychology of Shakespeare's characters that is at the root of the trouble. Now, professional actors need to know why they are to behave in a certain way in a particular scene; you cannot tell them, like amateurs, to get on to the stage and speak. They require to know why they say certain lines and what has been happening to the character off stage. To some extent this will result in treating Shakespeare as if he were Ibsen, but any producer knows that for the professional this is a necessity. A necessity: *not* something to welcome with both hands — for that is how the intelligentsia among the producers treat it. In a recent London production of *Macbeth*, the producer sat the cast round a table for days on end while they discussed the psychology of the play; a fortnight before opening, it is said, he announced that they 'must break it all up again' and they sat down once more to analyse the play. But with some producers, notably with Guthrie, the disease is more deep-seated. Crazy for naturalism, the characters are made 'modern'. Gertrude becomes a nymphomaniac, Doll Tearsheet a raucous Graham Greene tart, Goneril and Regan two common harridans from the suburbs, Edgar an escapee from a psycho-analytical clinic. Watch any modern production and see if at least one of the characters is not hot up and made 'interesting'. Even when a part is played straight, naturalism can destroy it. Consider Olivier's *Lear*. As the portrayal of an old man of uncertain temper whose wits turn, it was magnificent. But *Lear* is not just an old man who goes mad. There was more religion, grandeur and power, more sense of the meaning of the part in Devlin's performance. The only thing that is always forgotten is the play. The play is *not* the thing — but the ideas of the producer, such clever ideas, are everything. They spring from the difficulties and problems which the producer creates in order to solve them; the reason that he creates them is that he is convinced of the audience's cretinism. London producers at once insult Shakespeare and their audience: the audience cannot be expected to respond to Shakespeare as Shakespeare, and the Bard is not expected to know how to make an audience respond. Maybe audiences as a whole have not strong heads — but some among them have hearts. To appeal to the heart would, of course, be most dangerous.

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Lest this sound cantankerous, let me say that this is not the kind of wholesale condemnation of the London stage such as is commonly

delivered in *avant-garde* magazines. Brilliant London productions, excellently acted, have been staged in the last fifteen years. Not only of serious modern plays but of English period comedy and Russian tragedy. In Shakespeare too there have been *individual* performances of high tragedy: Olivier's Richard III, Hotspur (and of course his Shallow), Gielgud's Hamlet, Devlin's Lear, Helpmann's Shylock. Alec Guinness is an actor of genius, Malleson, Peggy Ashcroft and a dozen others have at times given admirable performances. But what Shakespearian *productions* can one unreservedly praise? Scarcely any. The hope for the future lies not, alas, in the Old Vic, but in Stratford where for the last two years Shakespeare has been better and better played. Perhaps it is of the hope born of despair when I say that I look earnestly towards Peter Brook. His *Romeo and Juliet* was a disgrace. But few young producers can ever have shown such a sure and staggering stage instinct, such a knowledge of how to move and group actors so that they can speak their lines with maximum effect. He is young enough to learn, so let us lay down (it is all the fashion today) a series of priorities. First, the poetry; second, dramatic action springing from the poetry; third, movement only so far as it heightens the effect of the poetry; fourth, the planning of the scene so that it is built round the dramatic climaxes in the scene and *To be or not to be* is not spoken to or in the wings or used as a throw away line; fifth, speed and no pauses between scenes; sixth, lighting to shine on the faces of everyone who speaks with hardly any exception. Less egoism, more reverence; less by-play, more seriousness; less naturalism, more of the grand style. Then let him throw in all he has got of genius in lighting, staging, grouping and ingenuity. But from beginning to end the producer must watch for one thing: Sincerity. Blank verse, as Shaw noticed, shows up an accent, and it shows up falsehood. To distinguish between stagily false, dramatic diction and true tragic diction must be the producer's ceaseless concern in the evil condition of our theatre. And let the producer end the dichotomy between the verse and acting so that they fuse into one another.

Lastly, to return to Mr Peter Wood. If he would learn to produce Shakespeare let him learn all he can in Cambridge about how to speak verse. And then let him set forth, not to America — for the New York theatre in Shakespeare has the vices of the London stage magnified — but to Germany. Let him study under Fehling at the Hebbel Theatre in Berlin or at Düsseldorf under Grundgens, one of the great actor-producers of our times. He will find that the Germans have forgotten more than we ever knew about lighting and staging. He will learn the rigid discipline, the absolute devotion to art, the miraculous precision of the German stage. And he will return not with reflections of London staging but with brand-new conceptions, tricks, devices, as well as the essence of the production of verse-

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drama, which will astonish and delight London audiences. But his present style of production will not do; and if anything here has wounded him — for he throws his heart into his work — may I gently quote one of Matthew Arnold's favourite sentences from Rivarol? 'No one considers how much pain every man of taste has had to *suffer*, before he inflicts any.'

THE SOURCES OF SERIALISM

ANTONY G. N. FLEW

It is almost twenty years since Gilbert Ryle, now Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy in the University of Oxford, first proclaimed to the Aristotelian Society his reluctant conversion to the view that the main if not the only proper business of philosophy 'is the detection of the sources in linguistic idiom of recurrent misconceptions and absurd theories.'¹ The purpose of this article is to provide an example of this kind of philosophizing by tracking down one particular, and, as it seems to us, particularly absurd, theory to some of its sources in the picturesque idioms of our language. The theory is that propounded by the late Mr. J. W. Dunne in his widely read book *An Experiment with Time*.² This theory is especially suitable for our purpose: Mr Dunne's book has been widely read and discussed; and in it he himself describes how he was led to his views. As his book was widely read his views may already be familiar. As he gives his own account of how he was led to them there will be evidence to confound or to corroborate our attempts to detect their sources in linguistic idiom.

Mr Dunne called his position 'Serialism'. This name was appropriate, for the gist of the extremely complicated view which he elaborated was that there must be an infinite series of time dimensions. But 'At infinity' (this passage comes on page 186) 'we shall have a Time which serves to time all movements of or in the various fields of presentation. This Time will be "*Absolute Time*", with an absolute past, present, and future'. And to observe any events we need an 'observer at infinity'. But Mr Dunne hastens to reassure us, "'Observer at infinity" does not mean an observer infinitely remote, in either Time or Space. "Infinity" here refers merely to the number of terms in the series. The observer in question is merely your ordinary, everyday, self, "here" and "now"' (p. 188). Thus stripped down to the bare bones this theory is clearly and manifestly preposterous. But in its full elaboration of complexity the absurdity is far harder to detect. Nevertheless Professor C. D. Broad, early and unerringly, put his finger on its vicious fundamental fallacy. He wrote, 'If I thought, as Mr Dunne seems to do, that I should have to postulate an unending series of dimensions and then an "observer at infinity" (who would plainly have to be the last term of a series which, by hypothesis, could have no

¹ *Proceedings of the Aristotelean Society*, 1931/2, p. 170.

² Third and revised edition published by Faber & Faber in 1934.

last term) I should of course reject this alternative as nonsensical'.¹ These are harsh words but to the point. Professor Broad's criticism here is quite shattering; and no elaboration of complications can possibly save Mr Dunne's theoretical edifice from complete collapse. For the series of time dimensions cannot be infinite if it is to have a last term; because an 'infinite series' is defined as 'a series which has no last term'. It is no use trying to reassure us by explaining that the 'observer at infinity' is all right because he is 'our ordinary everyday self'. Such assurances may conceal but they cannot remove the fundamental contradiction of Mr Dunne's position.

Since this position is thus fundamentally indefensible it is not necessary to investigate all its ramifications in detail. It will be sufficient, for instance, merely to mention that Mr Dunne thought that his views entailed all sorts of portentous consequences 'of considerable importance to mankind' (p. 5). 'Serialism discloses the existence of a reasonable kind of soul — an individual soul which has a definite beginning in absolute time, a soul whose *immortality, being in other dimensions of Time, does not clash with the obvious ending of the individual in the physiologist's Time dimension* . . . It shows that the nature of this soul and of its mental development provides us with a satisfactory answer to the "why" of evolution, of birth, of pain, of sleep, and of death' (pp. 235-6). After making several further claims of this sort, Mr Dunne modestly concludes: 'A theory which can achieve all this is not lightly to be set aside' (p. 237). These claims call merely for mention and not for examination. For if the premises from which such conclusions are supposed to follow are themselves not defensible, then it is superfluous to inquire whether or not it is possible validly to infer from these premises to these conclusions. For similar reasons it is superfluous to inquire what, if anything, can possibly be meant by 'introducing' or 'postulating a new dimension'. As Mr Dunne says, 'To introduce a new dimension as a mere hypothesis (i.e. without logical compulsion) is the most extravagant proceeding possible' (p. 4). It is perhaps worse than a most extravagant proceeding. It is perhaps a senseless suggestion. For what on earth is or could be meant by the *hypothesis* of an extra dimension? But such inquiries would be, as we have said, superfluous.

It is time to investigate the main problem of this article. How was Mr Dunne misled into this strange and ill-starred 'theory', into the irreconcilable contradictions of the Serialist position? It might be thought, in view of the fact that he devoted a large part of his book to descriptions of apparently precognitive dreams, and had put a great deal of hard pioneer work into investigating such dreams, that this theory was based somehow on this putative precognitive dream

¹ *Proceedings of the Aristotelean Society*, Supplementary Volume XVI, p. 199.

effect. But he himself emphasizes, 'The reader will note, I hope, that the foregoing tenets of Serialism have *not* been deduced from the empirical evidence supplied by our dream effect, but have been obtained by a direct analysis of what must, logically, be the nature of any universe in which Time has length and in which events are observed in succession' (p. 198). Since Mr Dunne himself did not base his case for Serialism on his dream effect, we too can with clear scientific consciences temporarily neglect that effect and go to meet Mr Dunne on his own chosen ground of logical analysis. He was avowedly accepting the suggestions of linguistic idiom. 'It is never entirely safe to laugh at the metaphysics of the "man-in-the-street"'. Basic ideas which have become enshrined in popular language cannot be wholly foolish or unwarranted. For that sort of canonization must mean, at least, that the notions in question have stood the test of numerous centuries and have been accorded unhesitating acceptance wherever speech has made its way... His [i.e. the man-in-the-street] idea was that temporal happenings involved *motion in a fourth dimension*. Of course he did not call it a fourth dimension — his vocabulary hardly admitted of that — but he was entirely convinced:

'(1) That Time had length, divisible into "past" and "future"'.
'(2) That this length was not extended in any Space that he knew

of. It stretched neither north-and-south, nor east-and-west, nor up-and-down, but in a direction different from any of those three — that is to say in a fourth direction.

'(3) That neither the past nor the future was observable. All observable phenomena lay in a field situated at a unique "instant" in the Time length — an instant dividing the past from the future — which instant he called "the present"'.
'(4) That this "present" field of observation *moved* in some queer

fashion along the Time length, so that events which *were at first* in the future *became* present and *then* past. The past was constantly growing' (pp. 130 and 131). Mr Dunne next proceeds to point out that 'The employment of these references [i.e. the words he has italicized] to a sort of Time behind Time is the legitimate consequence of having started with the hypothesis of a *movement* through Time's length. For motion in Time must be timeable. If the moving element is everywhere along the Time length at once, it is not moving. But the Time which times that movement is another Time. And the "passage" of that Time must be timeable by a third Time. And so on *ad infinitum*' (pp. 131-2). Mr Dunne comments that 'It is pretty certain that it was because he ["the man-in-the-street" who is earlier described as "the original discoverer of Time"] had a vague glimpse of this endless array of Times, one, so to say, embracing the other, that our discoverer abandoned further analysis' (p. 312).

We have three comments to make on this argument: *first* that there is indeed a large class of idioms which do suggest this sort of thing; *second* that if this suggestion is accepted then the infinite regress indicated by Mr Dunne does indeed develop; and *third* that it is quite wrong to do what Mr Dunne does — that is to say, to develop these suggestions and then to attribute the resulting metaphysical construction to the man-in-the-street — thus casting a mantle of everyday sobriety over the shoulders of a logical extravaganza.

The *first* comment is easy to support. Mr Dunne himself mentions some of these suggestive idioms — ‘when tomorrow comes’, ‘when I get to such and such an age’, ‘the years roll by’, and ‘the stages of life’s journey’. It is easy to go on adding to this list almost indefinitely. We speak of the ‘Future coming to meet us’, of ‘the march of Time’, of ‘Time, the ever rolling stream’, and (particularly at election times) of ‘marching forward looking steadfastly into the Future’. Such idioms do suggest that we live in ‘a universe in which Time has length and in which events are observed in succession’ (p. 198). In fact if we had to describe the class of idioms to which we are referring we could scarcely do so better than by saying that we were speaking of those idioms in which we talk of the events which occur in succession in the same place or to the same person as if they were not different and successive events but different objects or different places which were observed or visited one after another. In the examples so far given the suggestion is made by a moribund metaphor. We talk, for instance, of the ‘march of time’, a march which must of course be a march from event to event. And this piece of picturesque language thus gives rise to the idea that — to borrow a phrase from Sir Arthur Eddington — ‘Events do not happen: we merely come across them.’

Sometimes language promotes the same idea more subtly, more insidiously. The expression ‘That is past’ has what we might call a *grammatical* similarity to the expression ‘This is dark’. This may mislead into the assumption that pastness and darkness are *logically* similar characteristics. And hence we might argue that, since anything which actually possesses some characteristic, some quality like darkness, must exist somewhere, then the event which has this supposedly similar quality of pastness must also exist somewhere. And so, as it is manifestly not here now, perhaps it is secreted in some mysterious limbo which we must have left behind us on our forward march from the past into future. Thus the same analogy is again suggested, this time more indirectly. (If anyone generously believes that it is impossible that anyone ever should be misled by the grammatical resemblance of ‘This is past’ to ‘This is dark’ or ‘This is crinkled’, let him consult MacTaggart¹

¹ ‘The Unreality of Time’, by J. E. M. MACTAGGART, in *Mind*, 1908.

who did generate paradoxes by treating 'past', 'present' and 'future' as if they were quality words with the logic of 'dark', 'red' or 'crinkled'.)

Our *second* comment is that Mr Dunne has seen that if the suggestions made or insinuated by these idioms are adopted then a mysterious infinite regress develops. 'If Time passes or grows or accumulates or expends itself or does anything whatever except stand rigid and changeless before a Time-fixed observer, there must be another Time which times that second Time, and so on in an apparent series to infinity' (p. 158). 'Events do not happen: we merely come across them.' Then someone asks, 'We come across them one *after* another, I suppose?' And we notice that the event of coming across event one itself must occur before the event of coming across event two. And the event of coming across the event of coming across event one must again itself occur before the event of coming across the event of coming across event two. And here we have that infinite regress which generated Mr Dunne's theory. 'The glaring regress in the notion of time was a thing which had intrigued me since I was a child of nine. (I had asked my nurse about it.)' (pp. 4 and 5).

The *third* comment is that it is quite wrong of Mr Dunne to develop this infinite regress from the suggestions of idiom and then to claim the respectability of everyday familiarity for his metaphysical construction, by attributing it to the man-in-the-street, whose ideas, 'canonized' and 'enshrined in popular language... have stood the test of numerous centuries and have been accorded unhesitating acceptance wherever speech has made its way' (p. 130). Mr Dunne in effect admits that this attribution was unwarranted: for he concedes that the plain man's vocabulary did not permit him to talk of a 'fourth dimension' (p. 130); and also that after 'a vague glimpse of this endless array of Times [he] abandoned further analysis' (p. 132). The plain fact behind this picturesque talk about the man in the street is surely that our language is saturated with suggestions which could be developed into every sort of paradox and absurdity. These suggestions may take the form either of metaphor or of grammatical analogy. They are not adopted by the adult layman (for he has been conditioned not to press metaphors to absurdity and not to develop grammatical analogies into paradox), but only by the child in his unschooled simplicity and by the metaphysician in his trained subtlety. It is not a coincidence that the *Alice* books which contain a vast collection of such paradoxes and absurdities were written by a brilliant logician for the delight of an intelligent child.

So far we have tracked down Mr Dunne's infinite regress of time dimensions to its sources in idiom. Perhaps it is also possible to

detect a similar source of his self contradictions — absolute time and the absolute observers conceived as the last terms of series which are infinite, and which therefore by definition can have no last terms. Such expressions as 'at infinity' or 'to infinity' have a grammatical similarity to expressions like 'at this point' or 'to Norwich'. And this might suggest that 'infinity' like 'Norwich' referred to a place or position (albeit in the case of 'infinity' to a rather queer sort of place or position), and hence that it was logically quite in order to talk of the last point in an infinite series, at infinity. Such mistakes have been made. They are reminiscent of the *gaffe* of the Nazi propagandist who was misled by a British report of 'bombs dropped at random' into the rash claim that German aircraft had pressed home attacks on Random. They are reminiscent too of that possible misconception of the logic of the word 'nobody' which Lewis Carroll exploited in *Alice through the Looking Glass*:

'I see nobody on the road,' said Alice.

'I only wish I had such eyes,' the King remarked in a fretful tone. 'To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too! Why it is as much as I can do to see real people, by this light!' But this last suggestion as to the possible source of one of Mr Dunne's errors is a speculation: all our other suggestions have been confirmed in substance by his own confessions.

Though we have now executed our original programme of detecting the sources in linguistic idiom of one particular absurd theory, Mr Dunne has made a challenge which must not be entirely ignored. 'And we might suppose that every philosopher who found himself face to face with this conspicuous, unrelenting vista of Times behind Times would proceed, without a moment's delay to an exhaustive and systematic examination . . .' (p. 158). Or again in another passage in which he curiously writes of an infinite regress as 'a curious logical development', he complains of 'the usual philosophic method of dealing with any regress [which] is to dismiss it with the utmost promptitude, as something full of contradictions and obscurities' (p. 4).

Complaint against the philosophers for neglecting this possible time regress is not entirely just. Since Mr Dunne wrote — and therefore perhaps partly in response to his challenge — Professor J. N. Findlay and Mr J. J. C. Smart have published thorough articles dealing with these and other perplexities about time;¹ but in earlier generations in England Bradley and MacTaggart had been driven by the apparent contradictions to the desperate resort of proclaiming

¹ PROF. J. N. FINDLAY, 'Time, a Treatment of some Puzzles', in *The Australasian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy* for 1941. MR J. J. C. SMART, 'The River of Time,' in *Mind* for 1949.

that Time was Unreal.¹ We cannot hope to do more here than to suggest four possible ways of treating perplexities such as those raised by Mr Dunne.

The *first* way is the desperate resort of Bradley and MacTaggart, the hopeless and defiant proclamation of the unreality of time. This is, of course, open to the irresistible and relentless gibes of Professor G. E. Moore,² the spokesman within philosophy of the plain man's common sense. It is absurd to say that time is unreal when we know perfectly well that after breakfast we shall deal with our correspondence and that before breakfast we cut ourselves while shaving. We cannot hold that time is unreal, that the whole notion is self contradictory, for we know a great many temporal facts such as those already mentioned.

The *second* way is that of the actual plain man, as opposed to philosopher acting the plain man, and this is to shrug the shoulders and dismiss the perplexities unexamined with an, 'Well I know time is real because so and so occurred before so and so and tomorrow I shall do this and that and the other'. This is to shirk, not to treat the problems.

The *third* way is that of Mr Dunne — to accept the infinite regress and any other paradoxes as suggestions or even as demands that we should erect an elaborate structure of 'theory'. This way lies disaster; as this article has tried to show.

The *fourth* way is substantially that taken by Professor Findlay and Mr J. J. C. Smart in the articles referred to above. It is to see that the paradoxes and absurdities may have been generated by misleading grammatical analogies and metaphors. They may be the punishments which fall on those who succumb to the tempting siren songs of idiom. It has already been shown how the apparent similarity of such expressions as 'at infinity' and 'Nobody came' to expressions like 'at Norwich' and 'Somebody came' might mislead into mistakes about the logic of our language (or of any other language in which similar similarities occur). Someone might be misled by the similarity of 'at infinity' to 'at Norwich' — as Mr Dunne was probably himself misled — into the mistake of thinking that as 'Norwich' is the name of a place, in Norfolk, so 'infinity' too must refer to a position, or point in a series. Someone might be misled by the similarity of 'Nobody came' to 'Somebody came' into the mistake of thinking that 'Nobody' refers to somebody, a very queer and rather tenuous somebody. (It is this sort of mistake about negative terms which Professor Martin Heidegger seems to be

¹ The former in his *Appearance and Reality* and the latter in his *The Nature of Existence* and also loc. cit. above.

² 'A Defence of Common Sense', in Muirhead's *Contemporary British Philosophy*.

making, not in jest but in earnest, in his book *Was ist Metaphysik?*) It is mistakes such as these that we call mistakes about the logic of our language: because they consist in mistakes like treating a word which is of one 'logical type' as if it were a word of a different 'logical type'. We are enticed into such errors by the grammatical similarities of words of one logical type to words of another logical type: we treat 'infinity' as if like 'Norwich' it was the name of a place; we treat 'Nobody' as if it referred to a mysterious Somebody. In each case we treat words of different logical types as if they were logically similar, misled by the irrelevancy of their grammatical similarity.

The fourth way of treating paradoxes and absurdities such as those to which Dunne drew attention is to exploit them as signs that some mistake has been made about the logic of our language. Taking this way we shall not, with Bradley and MacTaggart, think we have made a great discovery, the discovery that Time is Unreal. Nor yet shall we, with Dunne, erect an edifice of theory upon foundations of paradox, under the misconception that we have discovered that time, so far from being unreal, is on the contrary far more complicated than had been thought, that there is, so to speak, both more to it and more of it than we had dared to suppose. Taking the fourth way we shall consider that the philosopher who, in generating a paradox, thinks he has made a discovery has probably made a mistake: but if he realizes that a mistake has been made, then he is half way to making a discovery. By detecting the sources of such paradoxes and absurdities in linguistic idiom, the philosopher can hope to make discoveries, not as once was hoped, about the ultimate and mysterious nature of reality, but discoveries less exciting about the structure and logic of the language in which we talk and theorize about the universe around us.

OBSERVATIONS ON 'THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD'

D. W. JEFFERSON

The Vicar of Wakefield is a story of calamity. Its hero, Dr Primrose, like Job, suffers a relentless succession of woes. He loses his fortune; his elder daughter elopes with a wicked seducer; his house is burnt to the ground; he is reduced to penury and thrown with his family into prison; it is made to appear that his younger daughter also has been foully abducted; and his son is arrested for murder. The happy ending restores everything, even virtue to the erring Olivia, but from a sketch of its contents up to the dénouement the novel would appear to be unbearably distressing.

It is also a moral tale, the theme being patience in adversity and fidelity to Christian virtue. 'I have been young, and now am old; yet never saw I the righteous man forsaken, or his seed begging their bread.' — These words are quoted by the vicar at the outset of his misfortunes and they are vindicated in the end. The novel is full of didacticism, Dr Primrose never missing an opportunity to make an improving comment on each situation as it arises. There is a moral observation in the title of most of the chapters.

What is interesting, in view of these apparently formidable elements, is that *The Vicar of Wakefield* does not over-exercise the sympathies or force a tyrannical moral seriousness upon the reader. Goldsmith's treatment of the vicar's misfortunes deserves critical analysis.

He deliberately reduces their emotional effect. His methods are well illustrated in the following scene where the vicar, who is counting his blessings, hears the news of Olivia's abduction:

'What thanks do we not owe to Heaven for thus bestowing tranquillity, health and competence! I think myself happier now than the greatest monarch upon earth. He has no such fireside, nor such pleasant faces about it. Yes, Deborah, we are growing old; but the evening of our life is likely to be happy. We are descended from ancestors that knew no stain, and we shall leave a good and virtuous race of children behind us. While we live, they will be our support and our pleasure here; and when we die, they will transmit our honour untainted to posterity. Come, my son, we wait for a song: let us have a chorus. But where is my darling Olivia? that little cherub's voice is always sweetest in the concert.' Just as I spoke Dick

came running in. 'O papa, papa, she is gone from us, she is gone from us for ever!' — 'Gone, child!' — 'Yes, she is gone off with two gentlemen in a post-chaise, and one of them kissed her, and said he would die for her: and she cried very much, and was for coming back; but he persuaded her again, and she went into the chaise, and said, "Oh, what will my poor papa do when he knows I am undone!"' — 'Now then,' cried I, 'my children, go and be miserable, for we shall never enjoy one hour more.'

The effect is between the serious and the comic, and is achieved by certain uses of language. The vicar's moral reflections and the reported speeches in Dick's narration (which has something of the formal 'messenger's' account) echo literary convention with a triteness which is half way towards parody. The conventionality distances the event, while the triteness contributes to the reduction of scale brought about by the absurd brevity of the episode. All the calamitous incidents in the book are composed on this small scale and open with an almost comic abruptness.

Like Dan'l Peggotty after Em'ly's elopement — and yet how unlike — he goes in search of his daughter. His brief, fruitless quest and his three weeks' illness are passed over quickly, and after a page or two he is moralizing, in an agreeably sententious style, on his return to normal spirits:

Man little knows what calamities are beyond his patience to bear, till he bears them: as in ascending the heights of ambition, which look bright from below, every step we rise shows us some new and gloomy prospect of hidden disappointment; so that in our descent from the summits of pleasure, though the vale of misery below may appear at first dark and gloomy, yet the busy mind, still attentive to its own amusement, finds, as we descend, something to flatter and to please. Still as we approach, the darkest objects appear to brighten, and the mental eye becomes adapted to its gloomy situation.

The extent of his recovery is soon demonstrated by his friendly interest in the strolling players, and by his spirited contribution to the political argument recorded in the next chapter. Between his saying, 'We shall never enjoy one hour more' and his return to normal there are only five or six pages of average print. This gives a humorous impression of his resilience, and the effect is intended; but it must be taken into account that the vicar is telling the story. The brevity with which he dismisses the anxious period may be put down — if we wish to defend his character on a realistic basis — to his eighteenth-century moderation and good manners, the subse-

quent episodes being more fully treated because they are more amusing fare for the reader. The situation has ambiguity. We cannot say just how much of the lack of pathos is due to the vicar's emotional limitations (in which case it has a suggestion of comedy) and how much to his urbanity as narrator.

The account of the fire is in no degree comic, but similar methods are employed to reduce the scale of the event:

I approached my little abode of pleasure, and before I was within a furlong of the place, our honest mastiff came running to welcome me.

It was now near midnight that I came to knock at my door: all was still and silent: my heart dilated with unutterable happiness, when, to my amazement, I saw the house bursting out in a blaze of fire, and every aperture red with conflagration. I gave a loud convulsive outcry, and fell upon the pavement insensible. This alarmed my son, who had till this been asleep; and he, perceiving the flames, instantly waked my wife and daughter; and all running out, naked, and wild with apprehension, recalled me to life with their anguish. But it was only to objects of new terror; for the flames had, by this time, caught the roof of our dwelling, part after part continuing to fall in, while the family stood, with silent agony, looking on, as if they enjoyed the blaze. I gazed upon them and upon it by turns, and then looked round for my two little ones; but they were not to be seen. O misery! 'Where,' cried I, 'where are my little ones?' — 'They are burnt to death in the flames,' said my wife calmly, 'and I will die with them.' That moment I heard the cry of the babes within who were just awaked by the fire, and nothing could have stopped me. 'Where, where are my children?' cried I, rushing through the flames, and bursting the door of the chamber in which they were confined! — 'Where are my little ones?' — 'Here, dear papa, here we are,' cried they together, while the flames were just catching the bed where they lay. I caught them both in my arms, and snatched them through the fire as fast as possible, while, just as I was got out, the roof sunk in. 'Now,' cried I, holding up my children, 'now let the flames burn on, and all my possessions perish. Here they are; I have saved my treasure. Here, my dearest, here are our treasures, and we shall yet be happy.'

The passage is full of words which ought to suggest emotional intensity — 'amazement', 'alarmed', 'wild with apprehension', 'anguish', 'terror', 'agony', 'misery' — but they are quite without emotiveness: they are used as counters, as the vocabulary proper to the occasion. Conventionality dominates the detail as well as the

language, from the archetypal mastiff onwards. The words and deeds come pat, as in a child's story. The fire, starting at the moment of the vicar's arrival, is an obvious story-book contrivance.

The vicar's first misfortune, the news that his money is lost, is given a more openly comic treatment. He is interrupted in an argument on his favourite theme of strict monogamy, a doctrine which he defends with more zeal than discretion against the father of his son's intended bride, who is contemplating his fourth marriage. Urged by a friend to give up the dispute, at least until the wedding is over, the vicar is indignant:

'How,' cried I, 'relinquish the cause of truth, and let him be a husband, already driven to the very verge of absurdity? You might as well advise me to give up my fortune as my argument?' 'Your fortune,' returned my friend, 'I am now sorry to inform you is almost nothing. . . .'

The disaster of his son's arrest is sprung upon him with the same suddenness. No sooner has he uttered the inevitable pious words on reading George's cheerful letter than the clanking of fetters is heard, and in he comes, a prisoner. The way the vicar's misfortunes are precipitated makes him seem the victim of a series of practical jokes on the part of an unkind fate. They have the air of artificial contrivance and neat timing, and with the same artificial neatness everything is put right in the end.

This reduction of scale involves also the character of the vicar. His infallibly correct moral response to his misfortunes gives him a puppet-like quality. The element of comedy in the misfortunes places him among the dupes of literature, so that we associate him not so much with Job as with Parson Adams. Whereas the latter is the victim of the practical jokes of men, Dr Primrose finds life itself a butter-slide.

Reduction of scale by the manipulation of traditional and conventional features is the technical formula on which the novel is based. Everywhere we meet the familiar and the archetypal, neatly scaled down. A good example is the picture of pastoral contentment which provides the background to the vicar's life:

The place of our retreat was in a little neighbourhood, consisting of farmers who tilled their own grounds, and were equal strangers to opulence and poverty. As they had almost all the conveniences of life within themselves, they seldom visited towns or cities in search of superfluity. Remote from the polite, they still retained the primeval simplicity of manners; and, frugal by habit, they scarce knew that temperance was a virtue. They wrought with cheerfulness on days of labour; but observed

festivals as intervals of idleness and pleasure. They kept up the Christmas carol, sent true love-knots on Valentine morning, ate pancakes on Shrovetide, showed their wit on the first of April, and religiously cracked nuts on Michaelmas eve. Being apprised of our approach, the whole neighbourhood came out to meet their minister, dressed in their finest clothes, and preceded by a pipe and tabor. A feast also was provided for reception, at which we sat cheerfully down; and what the conversation wanted in wit was made up in laughter.

The picture which follows of well-regulated domestic routine is a charming embodiment of an eighteenth-century conception of the good life, but in little. All the necessary ingredients — religion, paternal authority, good manners, order in the small things, mental exercise and recreation — are provided for:

The little republic to which I gave laws was regulated in the following manner: by sunrise we all assembled in our common apartment, the fire being previously kindled by the servant. After we had saluted each other with proper ceremony — for I always thought fit to keep up some mechanical forms of good breeding, without which freedom ever destroys friendship — we all bent in gratitude to the Being who gave us another day. This duty being performed, my son and I went to pursue our usual industry abroad, while my wife and daughters employed themselves in providing breakfast, which was always ready at a certain time. I allowed half an hour for this meal, and an hour for dinner; which time was taken up in innocent mirth between my wife and daughters, and in philosophical arguments between my son and me.

This method has several artistic advantages. The novelist secures for his world the values belonging to tradition, so that it becomes a well-built, well-shaped world, made of tried materials in known combinations. These values are not destroyed but only modified by his treatment of them, that is, by the reduction in scale. The way of life which Dr Primrose portrays remains a seriously estimable conception while we smile at its neat, miniature quality and at his agreeable complacency.

The *definiteness* of conventional materials, which enables them to be made greater or smaller or distorted in other ways by adjustments of style, also enables different species of them to be neatly combined together. In *The Vicar of Wakefield* we can distinguish a number of such ingredients, which may be labelled 'comedy of manners', 'picaresque', and so forth. It cannot be said that the juxtaposition of different 'kinds' here produces anything comparable to the subtle

effects which it produces in *Don Quixote*. (Mr Empson in *Some Versions of Pastoral* writes: 'One cause of the range of *Don Quixote*, the skyline beyond the skyline of its irony, is that though mock-heroic it is straight pastoral.') But in so far as each 'kind' may represent a different aspect of life or a different mode of deviation from reality, the manipulation of a number of them together offers at least the possibility of a pleasantly constructed work of art. To the reader who is familiar with the traditional ingredients of the novel before Goldsmith, it is agreeable to see so many of them reappear in modest, diminished form in *The Vicar of Wakefield*. George's account of his adventures belongs to the well-known category of digression often found in Fielding — the personal history; and Jenkinson's brief explanation of how he came to be a rogue is an infinitesimally small example of the same thing. The Tory oration and the sermon in jail belong to the category of the 'didactic digression'. The vicar's wanderings and encounters afford a very attenuated version of the traditional novel of the road, though there is more of the picaresque flavour in George's story. The incident of the green spectacles is in the 'cony-catching' tradition. The romantic story of Matilda is a very slight example of an inserted narrative differing in genre from the novel in which it appears, a phenomenon which occurs much more significantly in *Don Quixote*.

Mention has already been made of artificial story-book features. The role played by Mr Burchell, which is similar to that of the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, may be noted as a further example. The dénouement and multiple happy ending follow tradition to the verge of parody.

These formal elements tended to disappear in early nineteenth-century fiction. Some of them are still found in Dickens, but in his day the willingness to compose a novel entirely in terms of them had gone. The novelists of the modern age have had to find ways of approaching life without these artificial devices. The conventional elements in the older novels performed a useful function: they served to emphasize the story as story,¹ to call attention to the differences between it and life, and to place it at a certain distance from life. Art of this kind is refreshing in an age like ours when actuality exerts so great a pressure on literature and the problem of transforming it is one of such difficulty. (The question of whether the earlier or the later period produced the greater masterpieces need not arise in this context. No claim to greatness is made for Goldsmith's novel.)

A well-known characteristic of eighteenth-century novelists is the ease with which they negotiate transitions between different levels of

¹ In this phrase and elsewhere in this essay my indebtedness to Mr S. L. Bethell must be apparent.

moral attitude. (This is often facilitated by the bringing together of different conventional 'kinds'.) Thus in *Peregrine Pickle* we sympathize with the sensibilities of the virtuous heroine while enjoying as comedy the improper exploits, or most of them, of the hero. Much of the charm of Goldsmith's novel lies in the perfect relationship between opposing values: between Christian rectitude and social conformity, between the humorous and the moral, between the official and the unofficial self of the vicar. The vicar's polite and friendly relations with his new patron, Mr Thornhill, whom he knows to be wicked, is an interesting case of eighteenth-century manners. It may be argued that his Christian integrity is not compromised, because his duty to Caesar is governed by conventions which enjoy a generous measure of autonomy under the higher law of duty to God. The plea is a sound one, yet we may smile to see Christian zeal so nicely regulated. Such a situation would be impossible in Victorian literature. At the end of the story the vicar's attitude to Mr Thornhill is formulated with exquisite decorum:

'Heaven be praised,' replied I, 'there is no pride left me now: I should detest my own heart if I saw either pride or resentment lurking there. On the contrary, as my oppressor has once been my parishioner, I hope one day to present him up an unpolluted soul at the eternal tribunal.'

The transition from the solemn to the less solemn in eighteenth-century literature was facilitated by the use of an idiom for religious subjects which, while stating their sublime or awful significance, avoided too personal an impact. The turns of phrase now seem to us amusing, in their discreet orotundity:

The Author of our religion everywhere professes himself the wretch's friend. . . .

. . . wretches, who, finding all mankind in open arms against them, were labouring to make themselves a future and a tremendous enemy.

As we have already seen, it is with a similar use of language that Goldsmith tones down the effect of a distressing scene.

He shared with other writers of his time a refined sense of vocabulary. By a simple juxtaposition of words he could bring meanings together in a pleasing way:

The year was spent in a moral or rural amusement . . .

. . . I found the whole company as merry as affluence and innocence could make them.

Occasionally he achieves wit. The surprise effect of the last word of the following passage could not be bettered:

This gentleman he described as one who desired to know little more of the world than its pleasures, being particularly remarkable for his attachment to the fair sex. He observed that no virtue was able to resist his arts and assiduity, and that scarce a farmer's daughter within ten miles but what had found him successful and faithless. Though this account gave me some pain, it had a very different effect upon my daughters, whose features seemed to brighten with the expectation of an approaching triumph: nor was my wife less pleased and confident of their allurements and virtue.

Goldsmith's language brings neatness and precision of form down to the smallest units of composition.

BOOK REVIEWS

A. P. BERTOCCHI: Charles Du Bos and English Literature. *King's Crown Press: Oxford University Press, 20s. net.*

This is the first full-length study of Du Bos to appear, and it is appropriate that it should be in English and have such a title, for Du Bos had a life-long love of English letters. Professor Bertocchi has not restricted himself, however, to a mere exposition of Du Bos's appreciations of English writers. He is concerned to discuss the 'critic and his orientation', to attempt an 'approximation' of Du Bos as man and as critic, 'choosing English literature as most promising for a cast of the plumb'. The author is fully aware of the difficulty of his subject, of the subtlety and profundity of Du Bos's writing, and aware, too, that much material relevant to such a study is still unpublished. Even during the preparation of this book for the press, publication of the complete *Journal* was started. (Professor Bertocchi has referred to it in footnotes where necessary.) It is more than an 'introduction' to Du Bos, however; it is a long and scholarly work which future writers will find both informative and stimulating, and the bibliography is the most comprehensive yet compiled.

The first section is an attempt to 'determine the essential needs and tendencies of Du Bos the man and relate them, so far as possible, to his general theory and practice of criticism'. (The style is sometimes burdened with critical jargon — 'needs and tendencies' would have pained Du Bos.) The author emphasizes here Du Bos's alliance of thought and sensation to the end of achieving 'l'intelligence sans prix . . . celle qui a tout ensemble ses racines et ses antennes dans la sensibilité', his conception of 'exaltation', the relation between literary criticism and introspection established by Du Bos in his effort to know more of himself, and his preoccupation with the 'spirituel dans l'ordre littéraire'. He also brings out clearly the exalted status Du Bos confers on literature as *un moyen d'accès à l'absolu* and the alignment with 'Romanticism' and against French Classicism which this involves for Du Bos, as for Brémont and Murry. Du Bos's critical method is then shown in practice in his appreciations of a number of English poets (Shelley, Keats, Browning, Shakespeare and Byron), novelists (James, Eliot and Hardy) and critics (Pater, Gosse, Strachey and Murry), which the author studies, in particular, as illustrative of the nature of Du Bos's preoccupations as a critic. Professor Bertocchi is also clearly conscious of the great danger of an alliance of introspection and literary 'interpretation' — the danger of a subjectivism resulting from a projection of the critic's own problems and temperament upon the authors he studies. Consequently, he relates Du Bos's judgments to those of other critics on the same authors and on the basis of these comparisons claims 'a qualified objectivity' for Du Bos's work as agreeing with 'the consensus of a respected and established *famille d'esprits*'.

It is perhaps ungrateful, in the face of so carefully documented and so comprehensive a book, to wish that the author had given more space to considering the questions he raises in his Conclusion and other questions aroused by Du Bos's work. Is there not a contradiction between his 'almost instinctive rejection of the dualism of *flesh and spirit*' and his attempt, through art, to achieve 'une sortie hors du Temps, un transfert dans l'intemporal pur'? Is there not, also, a confusion between sensation and emotion in his conception of 'exaltation', and between both and the realm of the spiritual? Did Du Bos, in fact, fully appreciate the need for Baudelaire's attack on 'la poésie du cœur' and the attempt to rescue Romanticism from emotionalism, or relate to his thinking about literature Baudelaire's famous distinction: 'Le cœur contient la passion; . . . l'Imagination [in Baudelaire's sense] seule contient la poésie'? Is there not, in his idea of 'intui-

tion', a change of emphasis similar perhaps to the change (noted by Susan Stebbing) in Bergson's definition of intuition — adopted by Du Bos, as Professor Bertocci, following Marcel, points out — from 'a kind of intellectual sympathy' to 'instinct become disinterested, conscious of itself'? Did Du Bos ever wholly face the possible conflict between his devotion to art and his devotion to God, the possibly rival claims of 'God and the Mammon of art'? Professor Bertocci (and possibly Du Bos also) is aware of these questions and gives an answer to some of them, but without the thorough argument one could have desired. In fact, he would regard such argument as outside the scope of this study, which 'has sought to raise some of the important problems without the hope of doing them justice'. But the writer of any more directly *critical* study will certainly be grateful to Professor Bertocci for this substantial foundation for future Du Bos scholarship and — even more necessary — for a consideration of all the provocative and important issues involved in this critic's work.

D. G. CHARLTON

H. BUTTERFIELD: *George III, Lord North, and the People, 1779-1780*. *Bell, 30s. net.*

It becomes increasingly the concern of the modern historian to study the connections between events: the consequences of their simultaneity, the repercussions of one train of events on another, the subtle links of affiliation which, at least in retrospect, form the delicate fabric of the historical process. Professor Butterfield, who has otherwise earned for himself a well-deserved reputation as an acute student of the technique of historiography as well as an interpreter of the connections of science and of religion with those political and economic developments which are more commonly studied by professional historians, has here given us a fine example of how a close-up study of inter-connection can make excellent history. It is, indeed, a model of the modern technique of historiography.

The years 1779 and 1780 saw the convergence of several different trends of events upon one focal point — the ministry of Lord North and the climax of George III's experiment in government. There is the background of the American War, already going very badly for Britain. There is the climax of the Irish movement for independence, the semi-revolutionary crisis connected with the rise of the Volunteers and Grattan's declaration of legislative independence. There is the remarkable movement of extra-parliamentary agitation connected with the Yorkshire Association, which cradled the new programme of radical parliamentary reform. There is the alliance of the parliamentary opposition, including Rockingham Whigs and Foxites alike, with these extra-parliamentary forces, giving birth to the demand for what Burke called 'Economical Reform' and culminating in Dunning's famous motion that 'the influence of the crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished'. Finally, in 1780, there is the blood-letting and burning of the Gordon Riots which, as Professor Butterfield shows, helped to bring the general crisis to an end and swung opinion for a time in favour of government and public order.

Here is splendid material for the exercise of Professor Butterfield's particular approach to the study of history and a combination of dramatic events with historically significant events which lends itself admirably to his talents for microscopic analysis. The book improves in general interest and in clarity as it goes on. The earlier sections on the American War and political squabbles at home, and on the genesis of the Irish Movement, are perhaps too smothered in detail to make easy or attractive reading. But the sections on the Yorkshire Association with its development of the art of petitioning, on the contest between the more moderate plans for 'economical reform' and the more radical demands

for universal suffrage and annual elections, and on the fruits of the extra-parliamentary agitation are brilliantly done. The author has tricks of style and of punctuation, particularly excessive use of dashes and of parenthesis generally, which are irritating. His use of unusual imagery, at times highly effective, does not always come off. But these are minor defects in a major work of historical scholarship which serves to illuminate an important and unduly neglected period of our national history, and which integrates better than any previous work on the subject the diverse forces which were then transforming our whole political system.

DAVID THOMSON

A. H. BRODRICK: *Lascaux: a Commentary*. Lindsay Drummond, 15s. net.

The famous palaeolithic painted caves of France and Spain fall into two fairly distinct geographical groups; one in the Pyrenees and one on the west side of the Massif Central, inland from Bordeaux. Stylistically and archaeologically there is little to choose between the two groups, but from the point of view of preservation the Spanish cave of Altamira has hitherto held undisputed first place.

Interesting and artistically important though the Northern discoveries were, particularly in the department of Dordogne, none could offer anything really comparable to the profusion of brilliantly preserved polychrome figures at the famous Spanish site. That is, until September 1940, when pure chance revealed near the Chateau de Lascaux above Montignac, Dordogne, a second series of at least equally spectacular — if perhaps less beautiful — polychrome drawings and paintings.

The Lascaux figures are in the same miraculous state of preservation as those of

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Altamira and have, in addition, interesting stylistic peculiarities which suggest that they may belong to the Aurignacian, rather than to the much later and commoner Magdalenian stage. By great good fortune, four of the leading specialists in this branch of pre-history were able to visit the site within a few days of its discovery. All due precautions were taken to preserve it from vandalism, and before the year was out two experienced photographers started to make a careful photographic record of the most important finds.

The first of these, M. F. Windels, has now published 168 of his photographs in a book entitled *Lascaux: Chapelle Sixtine de la Préhistoire*, with an introduction by Mlle Laming. The copyright of this work has been secured by Messrs. Faber and Faber, who are said to be about to produce an English version. In the meantime the original is unobtainable in this country, and the only available description is provided by the short popular account which forms the subject of this review.

The nucleus of Mr Brodrick's 'commentary' is formed by forty-six photographs by Maurice Thaon, who accompanied the Abbé Breuil on his original visit to the site. On the whole these photographs are good and well reproduced — though why it should have been thought necessary to print them with half, sometimes three quarters of the page left blank, is difficult to understand. If only for their sake, however, the book should be reckoned a good 15 shillings worth by anyone at all interested in prehistory. Having said this much something must also, I suppose, be said of the text which accompanies them..

The author tells us that he discussed his essay with two of the most distinguished prehistorians in France; I find it hard to imagine what their comments can have been. Mr Brodrick's style approximates to that of the more sensational Sunday papers, with perhaps a slight trans-Atlantic flavour thrown in. His 'chapters' are divided up by headlines such as 'A Marvelous Adventure', 'The Little Hand', 'A Prehistoric Tragedy', or 'The Apocalyptic Beast'.

Between these are sandwiched a few juicy titbits of information, some of which may be sound, but some also certainly unsound. Other passages might have been omitted altogether with advantage, for instance the ingenious explanation of why Aurignacians did not live in caves. As an explanation it is almost watertight, except for the fact that Aurignacians *did* live in caves, and just as much as anybody else, for all we know to the contrary. Nevertheless, I think my advice still is, buy the book for the pictures, and skip the text. Unless that is, you like this type of journalese, in which case I can particularly recommend a passage in Chapter III beginning: 'A shoddy and ignoble shack of planks and corrugated iron now covers the humble entrance cut where Ravidat slipped through the earth to find his dog. . . . Before you is the Mycenaean wall looming up, it seems, infinitely high. You pass through a small clanging iron door and you are in a sanctuary of marvels'. Anyone thinking of going to Lascaux (and it is very easy), will find the map on page 46 useful.

CHARLES MCBURNEY

HELEN GARDNER: *The Art of T. S. Eliot*. Cresset Press, 12s. 6d.

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feels, is so accustomed to living with eternal things that to enter the world of *Four Quartets* offers almost no excitement or shock, only the happiness of intimate participation. And though her exegeses are remarkable for their closeness, the impression of leisureliness remains — she talks about nothing which is not in the poems, yet her commentary has the air of being a meditation upon the text rather than a critical appraisal. The result is that the book is at once the most impersonal of studies — for in a world as large as that which she and Mr Eliot inhabit it is possible for people not to know one another personally — and the most *loving* of appreciations of the actual poetic achievement. This passage, on the theme of *Ash Wednesday*, is representative of the staple of Miss Gardner's writing:

... The theme of penitence and the aspiration towards holiness, the acceptance of the Church's discipline of self-examination, contrition, confession and satisfaction is crossed by another theme. It is clear that the poem springs from intimately personal experience, so painful that it can hardly be more than hinted at, and so immediate that it cannot be wholly translated into symbols. There is anguish both at the exhaustion of feeling and at its recrudescence, at loss and at feeling loss, at not desiring and at still desiring ... While the conscious mind is occupied with the effort to will what is, to be 'whole in the present', the almost unbearable sense of what was troubles its constancy and makes its affirmations and petitions seem ironic. The struggle between the effort to 'construct something upon which to rejoice' and the pain of existence, the distinction between what the poet wishes to wish and what he does not wish to wish, but still wishes, gives to *Ash Wednesday* its peculiar intensity. (Page 104.)

Miss Gardner's book brings home to us with renewed emphasis the cardinal fact (which has received full recognition only since the appearance of the *Quartets*) that Eliot's poetic development shows an unbroken continuity. From the fragments shored up against our ruin at the close of *The Waste Land* there rises *Ash Wednesday*; and that 'time of tension between dying and birth' is, in turn, redeemed by *Four Quartets*. 'His development', writes Miss Gardner, 'has been a growth in the understanding of his earlier experience, not a rejection of it'; and the source of the continuity is to be found in 'the integrity with which he has explored his own vision of life'. What that vision of life is Eliot himself has declared in a passage in *The Use of Poetry*:

... The essential advantage for a poet is not to have a beautiful world with which to deal: it is to be able to see beneath both the beauty and the ugliness; to see the boredom, and the horror, and the glory.

Miss Gardner uses this charged formula to good purpose in her interpretation of what happens in Eliot's poetry between *Prufrock* and *Little Gidding*. Her comments on the early poems draw attention to that persistent 'sense of the abyss', in the very heart of the images of 'staleness, monotony and weary repetitiveness', which establishes their continuity with the later poetry; and the brief comparison she offers between *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses* (by itself a small masterpiece of Joycean criticism) reinforces this with a special authority. She here puts her finger on what is perhaps the profoundest source of the difference between that view of life which Eliot shares with Pascal and that other which is common to a Joyce and a Montaigne. It is, finally, the incapacity of a Joyce and a Montaigne to weary of the infinite variety of life which saves them from the misery of man without God. In Miss Gardner's words: 'His [Joyce's] imagination is not haunted by either the presence or the absence of God. Although he may bore his readers, he seems incapable of boredom himself — perhaps this is why he sometimes wearies those whose appetite for life is less insatiable than his own.' (Page 86.)

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And so we pass into the world of the poems 'after 1930' — *Ash Wednesday*, *Ariel Poems*, *Four Quartets*; 'from intensity of apprehension to intensity of meditation', and, finally, to the glimpses of glory in the closing sections of *Little Gidding*. Miss Gardner establishes the 'transitional' character of *Ash Wednesday* by a general analysis of the difference between its characteristic imagery and rhythms and those of the earlier poems; and, in the details of her exegesis, wonderfully illuminates its complexities and ambiguities. And on the *Quartets*, as we have remarked, her gifts of 'inward' appreciation, of sustained participation in the movements of the poet's mind, and of incisive utterance find their most impressive scope. What she says about the *Quartets* cannot, we believe, be less than definitive. A word may perhaps be said here about her happy inspiration to apply to *Four Quartets* (always, however, without undue emphasis) the celebrated method of interpretation used by the commentators on the *Divine Comedy*. It may be thought that to make this statement about *Burnt Norton*, for instance, that the 'literal' meaning is 'simply that the poet has felt a moment of inexplicable joy, a moment of release'; the 'moral' meaning is 'the virtue of humility: a submission to the truth of experience, an acceptance of what is, that involves the acceptance of ignorance', and the 'mystical' meaning is 'grace: the gift by which we seek to discover what we have already been shown'; or, of *The Dry Salvages*: that the 'literal' meaning is history, the 'moral', hope, and the 'mystical', the Incarnation ('all the annunciations of the poem have validity through one Annunciation') — it may be argued that to say this is to say rather little. One suspects, however, that this is as much as, and no more than, many readers will require to set them off on their own explorations of the poems, and so to discover for themselves the detailed coherences which make up their total meaning. It might, in any case, be an interesting experiment to try with undergraduates about to embark on their first reading of the *Quartets*.

Finally, Miss Gardner earns our special gratitude by her chapter on Eliot's plays. For the plays have on the whole received rather less detailed attention than the poetry, partly because they have seemed (but quite deceptively) to be easier to understand than the poems, partly (and inconsistently) because it has been so much more difficult to arrive at a 'received' judgment of the kind of achievement they represent. Miss Gardner shirks none of the difficulties; makes some very cogent criticisms (notably of Archbishop Thomas: her suggestion that 'a more simple and conventional treatment of the central figure would have been less discordant with the truth and grandeur of the choruses' is supported by a persuasive analysis of the dramatic shortcomings of Eliot's conception of Thomas as a 'superior person'); and, whether she praises or blames, never fails to illuminate. This is a rare book, which no serious reader of Mr Eliot's poetry will care to miss.

D. KROOK

D. H. MACGREGOR: *Economic Thought and Policy*. Oxford University Press, 5s. net.

It appears from the foreword that Professor Macgregor's work has two objects. First: to deal 'mainly with the background of economic thought during the same period' as his earlier *Evolution of Industry* (i.e. the nineteenth century in England). Secondly: to show that 'the classical economists did not believe in what is commonly called *laissez-faire*, nor in any automatic full employment under private enterprise'; and further, that 'the new economics disengages the idea of effectual demand from policies in which it was implicit, and makes it a ruling concept'. The two objects are to some extent complimentary, but the second has been allowed to predominate somewhat at the expense of the first. Moreover, the balance of the author's interest lies more with the modern world than might be expected in a book whose aims are mainly historical.



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The opening chapters are a commentary on two of the leading ideas of the *Evolution of Industry*. 'All organization is the reply to the pressure of needs.' It is the method of relieving scarcity arising from the pressure of population on resources. 'Scarcity' is defined and the Malthusian argument is considered. The second notion which comes up for comment is that 'the fundamental idea of the nineteenth century was power. The method by which it has been obtained is combination'. But this may mitigate the effects of organization in relieving scarcity if it involves a restriction of output. These observations may be just, but they do not contribute very directly to the purpose of outlining the economic thought of the period to which the original ideas apply. Both these ideas raise problems concerning the distribution of wealth, and Professor Macgregor himself recognizes that 'the nineteenth century was one of imperfectly shared abundance'. The problem of distribution was one of the main prepossessions of thought in the period. Thus Ricardo writes to Malthus: 'Political Economy you think is an inquiry into the nature and causes of wealth — I think it should be called an inquiry into the laws which determine the division of the produce of industry amongst the various classes who concur in its formation.' In preparing the stage for his second object, Professor Macgregor has thrust the problem of distribution into the background, and even if he is right in his subsequent contention that we have not taken full account of the classical economists' references to effective demand, the picture is still distorted.

It is nowadays commonly recognized that Keynes did not give a completely true account of the classical economics. Our author shows, by assiduous quotation, that the classical economists did sometimes consider the possibility that the demand for consumption and investment goods may fall short of aggregate supply. Thus, according to J. B. Say: 'Values once produced may be devoted either to the satisfaction of wants or to a further act of production. They may also be withdrawn both from unproductive consumption and from reproductive employment.'

Now Keynes may sometimes have been an inaccurate historian of economic theory, but he was always an ingenious one; and if an adequate explanation is to be given of his misrepresentation of the classical economics, some regard must be had for this second characteristic. On the whole, I think, Keynes was too much inclined to take the nineteenth-century economists at their own valuation. They believed there was a real dispute concerning the possibility of general overproduction. 'Any difference of opinion on it,' said Mill, 'involves radically different conceptions of political Economy, especially in its practical aspect.' We would agree with Professor Macgregor that 'modern analysis gains rather than loses authority by recognizing, instead of depreciating, the growth of its ideas in the work of earlier writers'. But if the 'new economics' is to be set in a just relationship with the development of earlier thought, then the history of that development should be written with a more critical eye to the true nature of the arguments of the classical economists than they themselves had. In addition, such an appraisal would probably make much clearer the connection between thought and policy which it is Professor Macgregor's further object to discuss.

It is unfortunate that this book does not keep more fully to its purpose, for it starts a great number of exceedingly interesting and fertile ideas. Their very number is, indeed, the difficulty, and had they been fewer each might have been treated in greater and more satisfactory detail.

S. LETCHFORD